

EMPOWERING CONGREGATION THROUGH THE UNVEILING OF THE
INNER-CITY TEEN MOTHER ENTWINED IN THE
SYSTEMS OF INCARCERATION

BY

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ABSTRACT

EMPOWERING CONGREGATION THROUGH THE UNVEILING OF THE INNER-CITY TEEN MOTHER ENTWINED IN THE SYSTEMS OF INCARCERATION

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In 2010, there were roughly 614,000 babies born in the U.S. to teen girls between the ages of 15 and 19¹. In 2014 in the U.S., there were an estimated 2.5 million minor children with a parent in jail². The demographic makeup for both these statistics is overwhelmingly disproportionate by race. Studying parenting from detention, authors Sara Wakefield and Christopher Wildeman wrote, “Mass imprisonment has transformed racial inequality among children, with implications for the future of inequality in America³.” They suggest that society’s children are exposed to potentially detrimental effects when in contact with the systems of incarceration. Imagine those implications when we consider a pregnant teen within those statistics. Imagine daily life for teen mothers and their children as they navigate the systems of incarceration.

In this dissertation project, which I now know to be the ministry I was born to pursue, my team and I will create a public awareness campaign intended to expose this very fragile group. We recommend that they comprise a uniquely committed sub-community. They are worthy of the attention because helping them provides intervention for a perpetuating racial disparity at its nascent state. They are worthy of the attention because they typify the historical assembly of churches, and are therefore the modern congregation offering hope for our society.

¹Tonya Lewis, “New Rankings Reveal Teen Pregnancy Rates in Each State,” in *Wellness Section* of The Huffington Post (May 5, 2014). https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/05/teen-pregnancy-rate_n_5269203.html.

² Sara Wakefield and Christopher Wildeman, *Children of the Prison Boom: Mass Incarceration and the Future of American Inequality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

³Sara Wakefield and Christopher Wildeman, *Children of the Prison Boom*, Ibid., 2.

To John, Micheal Antoine, John-Anthony, John Jr., Trevor, Kaila, Malcolm, Alexandria.

Every day you make me want to be a better person in the world.

To my mother, Roxanne Williams, eyes did not see what the soul imagined.

I embrace every promise. You are here.

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I would not have gotten through this process had it not been for my NYTS family. Dr. Wanda Lundy, Dr. Keith Russell, Dr. Eva Carroll and my advisor, Dr. C. Vernon Mason, you have kept me from falling. God is truly amazing.

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²Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, “Parental Incarceration: What We Know and Where We Need to Go,” by Christopher Uggen and Suzy McElrath. Volume 104:Issue 3, Article 3. Fall 2014. 603.
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⁴Eric Martin, “Hidden Consequences: The Impact of Incarceration on Dependent Children,” *NIJ* [National Institute of Justice] *Journal* 278, March, 2017. <https://nij.gov/journals/278/Pages/impact-ofincarceration-on-dependent-children.aspx>. 2. Date last accessed: March, 2018.

^{5,6,7,8} Journal of Health and Social Behavior, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Stress Proliferation across Generations? Examining the Relationship between Parental Incarceration and Childhood Health, by Kristin Turney. 2014 DOI: 10.1177/0022146514544173 55. 308.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

Staten Island, New York, known as the “Borough of Parks” has the 3rd largest land mass and is the least populated of the five boroughs comprising New York City⁴. It is connected to Manhattan by the Staten Island ferry, in addition to New Jersey and Brooklyn by a series of bridges. It is home to 170 parks, encompassing 12,300 acres of protected parkland, more than a third of its total land mass⁵. There are many outdoor activities and events made available to its residents all year-round. Staten Island is also the place where Freshkills is found, the world’s largest landfill at its height, until its closing in 2001⁶. The site, which at one time was so large it could be viewed from outer space, was temporarily partially reopened after the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center to store and catalog debris and human remains. Freshkills is slated to be converted to a park in the coming years, and upon its renovation, will become New York City’s 2nd largest public park, roughly three times the size of Manhattan’s Central Park⁷.

Staten Island boasts a unique dimension found common to island living, that its residents are a very close-knit community. It has its pitfalls also. In 1993, a referendum was placed on the ballot for Staten Island to secede from the rest of New York⁸, but the measure was ultimately voted down.

⁴ World Population Review. 2017. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/boroughs/staten-island-population/>.

⁵ Visit Staten Island. 2018. <http://www.visitstateniland.com/parks/>.

⁶ World Population Review. Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Staten Island is comprised of four distinct parts with the borough's highways providing approximate "borders": the North Shore, which is the urbanest in demographic makeup⁹ and consists of the majority of the borough's minority population; the East Shore, which has the world's 4th longest boardwalk¹⁰; the West Shore, which is the most industrial area of the Island and the least populated section¹¹, and the South Shore, which is the most suburban¹², is wealthier and Whiter. According to the World Population Review, Staten Island is "the only borough with a non-Hispanic White majority¹³". It is a frequent location of many movie sets, including "Good Fellas," "The Godfather," and HBO's "Boardwalk Empire." The City Council recently elected to erect a duplicate of the famed "London Eye" which adorns the landscape in England along the shoreline near the Staten Island Ferry. This project, which at this present writing has been stalled by contractual issues, is projected to bring hundreds of jobs to the residents of the North Shore, and provide a boost to the local economy.

As an island borough, other traits make Staten Island distinct from the other four districts comprising New York City. NYC Comptroller Alan Hevesi wrote in his 2005 State of the Borough Economy report that Staten Island was "*different from the New York City's other boroughs [in that] its economy is more oriented towards local needs, and its housing mix resembles the surrounding suburbs more than the rest of the city. The borough, however, struggles with many big-city concerns, such as finding ways to assist local economic growth, managing development to avoid sprawl and congestion, improving transportation, and raising the quality of life for its residents*¹⁴." The same

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Alan Hevesi, Office of the State of New York Comptroller, *Staten Island: Economic Development and the State of the Borough Economy* (Report 14-2005, 2005), 1.

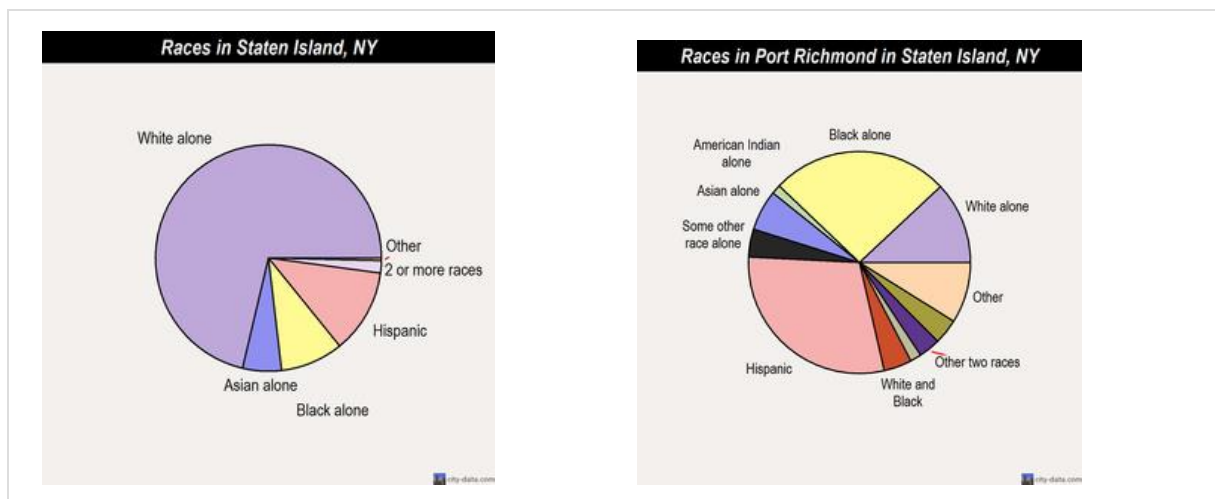
report cited that Staten Island was the “fastest growing borough in the City during both the 1990’s and the early 2000’s¹⁵”. During those time periods, Blacks and Latinos began to flood the North Shore, particularly to Mariner’s Harbor, Stapleton, and Port Richmond, three neighborhoods there. This demographic shift is especially true of Port Richmond, the home setting for this dissertation project. In 1970 (the year when detailed reporting for those of the various Hispanic heritage was first taken¹⁶), the population of Port Richmond was 5% Black, with no recorded Hispanic residents. However, by 2010, Port Richmond’s demographic was recorded at 38% Hispanic, with a Black population of 17%¹⁷. This tremendous demographic shift of the past 50 years included an influx of Mexican, El Salvadorian, Nicaraguan and Liberian immigrants. In fact, Staten Island as a whole currently has the most extensive concentration per area of Liberian peoples outside of their country. There is also a burgeoning Sri Lankan community here.

¹⁵ Alan Hevesi, Office of the State of New York Comptroller, Ibid. 2.

¹⁶ Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, *“Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970-1990, For Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States,”* US Census Bureau Population Division Working Paper No. 76, (2005): 83, <https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.pdf>.

¹⁷ New York City Census FactFinder, <http://www.city-data.com/nbmaps/neighborhoods-staten-island-new-york.html#n35>.

Figure 1. Demographic Make-Up of Staten Island, 2010-2016



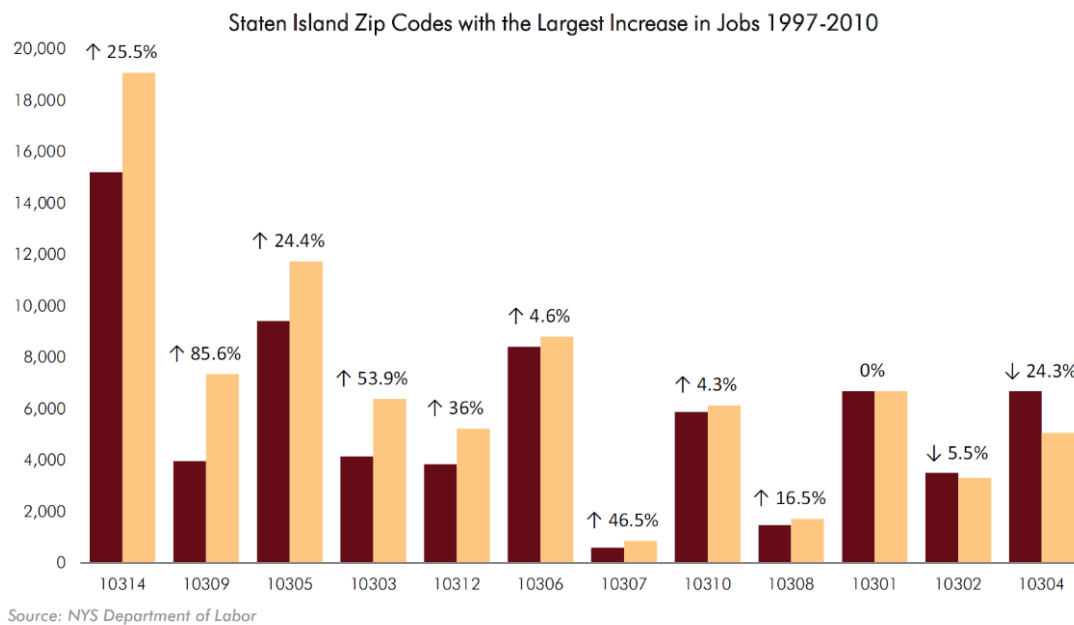
Staten Island’s economy and infrastructure has struggled to keep up with the demands of this burgeoning population increase and over the decades began to diminish, particularly in areas like Port Richmond. Large institutions that previously employed thousands began to close, leaving little to no replacement of employment opportunities. The borough’s historic Seaview Hospital, a major employer of many minority residents, dedicated in 1913 as the single largest (2,000 bed) and most expensive treatment facility for tuberculosis in the U.S. closed in 1973¹⁸. By 2010, Port Richmond had become the third most impoverished neighborhood on Staten Island, based on median income¹⁹. Nepotism and cronyism in part caused scarce jobs on the Island to go to Whites. Figure 2 below details the disproportionate job growth in Staten Island by neighborhood for the period of 1997-2010; Port Richmond is

¹⁸ Will Ellis, “The Seaview Children’s Hospital,” Abandoned Places and History from the Five Borough and Beyond, Abandoned NYC, May 2015, <https://abandonednyc.com/2015/05/20/the-sea-view-childrens-hospital>.

¹⁹ City-Data.com, 2015. <http://www.city-data.com/nbmaps/neigh-staten-island-new-york.html#n35>.

zip code 10302. Where there is slower job growth in an area, higher under-employment rates rise.

Figure 2.



Despite our country's recent Obama-era bailouts and subsequent economic recovery, the Port Richmond community is only slowly rebounding, and poverty rates continue to climb. According to findings of the U.S. Census, families living below the poverty line in Port Richmond in 1999 was 14% (Chart 1 below). But by 2016, that rate had increased to 18.7% (see Chart 2). This finding is higher than the overall borough-wide poverty rate of 10.4% (see Chart 3).

CHART 1. Poverty Statistics for Port Richmond, SI (Zip Code: 10302)

POVERTY STATUS IN 1999 (below poverty level)	Actual	%
Families	541	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	14.0
With related children under 18 years	448	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	20.4
With related children under 5 years	214	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	24.5
Families with female householder, no husband present	322	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	30.2
With related children under 18 years	270	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	37.6

CHART 2. PORT RICHMOND ONLY 2016

	-----All Families-----				----Married/Couple Families----				----Female Householder, No Husband Present-----			
	Actual		% Below Poverty Level		Actual		% Below Poverty Level		Actual		% Below Poverty Level	
Families	4,095	+/-275	18.7%	+/-4.4	2,699	+/-261	11.8%	+/-4.5	1,054	+/-187	33.4%	+/-10.8
With related children of householder under 18 years	2,131	+/-196	25.6%	+/-7.1	1,381	+/-206	14.7%	+/-7.0	616	+/-161	43.8%	+/-15.5
With related children of householder under 5 years	249	+/-111	27.3%	+/-22.1	168	+/-95	15.5%	+/-24.0	81	+/-60	51.9%	+/-40.3

CHART 3. STATEN ISLAND BOROUGH 2016

	---All Families-----				----Married/Couple Families----				---Female Householder, No Husband Present-----			
	Actual		% Below Poverty Level		Actual		% Below Poverty Level		Actual		% Below Poverty Level	
Families	122,894	+/-1,459	10.4%	+/-0.5	90,543	+/-1,493	5.9%	+/-0.5	24,332	+/-899	26.2%	+/-2.0
With related children of householder under 18 years	59,128	+/-1,254	15.0%	+/-1.0	42,743	+/-1,304	7.6%	+/-0.9	13,177	+/-836	37.3%	+/-3.3
With related children of householder under 5 years	10,499	+/-713	11.2%	+/-2.3	8,152	+/-661	5.0%	+/-1.9	1,750	+/-352	38.4%	+/-8.2
With related children of householder under 5 years and 5 to 17 years	10,720	+/-757	20.4%	+/-3.2	7,976	+/-665	11.8%	+/-2.9	2,238	+/-371	49.7%	+/-9.5
With related children of householder 5 to 17 years	37,909	+/-1,264	14.5%	+/-1.3	26,615	+/-1,082	7.1%	+/-1.1	9,189	+/-761	34.1%	+/-3.8

From these charts, we can assess that the mean statistics by neighborhood can indeed differ from the overall city and national trends. These depressed pockets do indeed exist.

Nestled in the heart of Port Richmond is St. Philips Baptist Church (herein referred to as SPBC), the launching place of this project. It consists of an almost exclusively African-American congregation, and at 148 years old, is the oldest historically Black Baptist church on the Island. It was organized in 1870, a mere seven years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, the executive order issued by Abraham Lincoln to abolish slavery. According to church history, it was started by two Black families who had migrated north from the Jim Crow south. Racism has always been a factor of life on Staten Island, and it was only in the late 1960's that opportunities for African-Americans on the Island, including the members of SPBC began to open up. During that time many SPBC members entered

fields previously denied to them. In 1966 the congregation moved from a residential house, the original church on Faber Street in Port Richmond, into its own neo-Gothic, stained glass edifice they purchased from a Scandinavian Lutheran Church²⁰; it is where the church worships today. In that same year, the members of the church commissioned an artist named Gimbalmo to paint the 15 ft. mural of the very Caucasian-looking “Good Shephard,” which still overlooks the pulpit. By 1968, members of the congregation satisfied the \$80,000 mortgage note acquired only two years previously²¹, quite a financial accomplishment at that time, and evidence of both community dedication and increasing economic prosperity.

In addition to its financial growth, the Church acquired a rich history of civil rights activism. It’s 14th pastor, the late Rev. Dr. William Ashford Epps, an icon of the community who served SPBC for 44 years, along with several church members, joined the march on Washington, D.C. where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. rendered the now famous “I Have A Dream” speech in 1963. More joined the civil rights movement in 1965 after being outraged by what they witnessed, along with most of the nation, on “Bloody Sunday” at the Edmond Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama. The church’s current pastor, the Rev. Dr. Tony Baker, Sr. is its 15th leader in the history of the church and has forged new and more diverse community partnerships as the Church continues to be a leader of civic activism on the Island.

The members of SPBC eventually felt the decades-long economic travails of Port Richmond detailed earlier. They were hit hard. Many SPBC members who were employed by Seaview Hospital (a substantial number, from its first Black nurses, to resident attendants and maintenance workers) lost their livelihood and their family's only source of income.

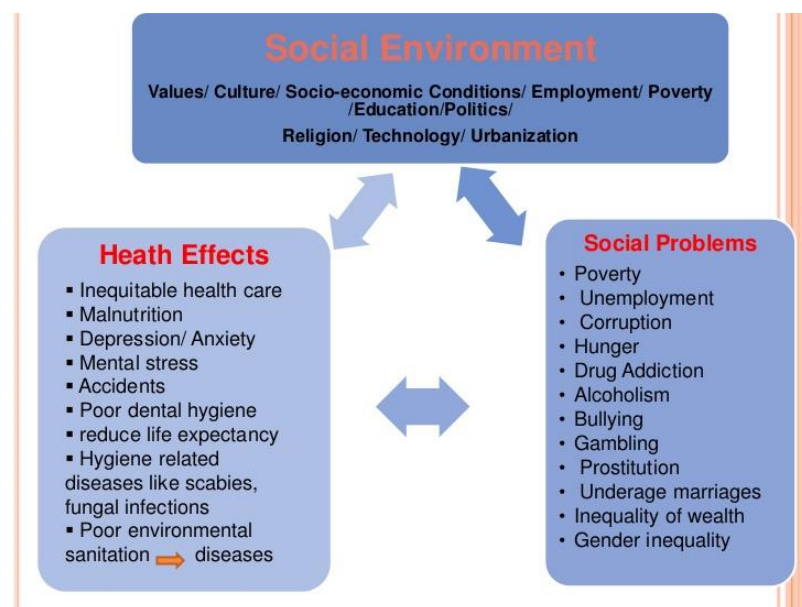
²⁰ The New York City Public Library, Digital Collections, 2018. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-cba7-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

²¹ St. Philips Baptist Church History, 2017.

Though larger in membership, SPBC struggled along with its surrounding community which had begun to display the effects of poverty in its midst.

Studies have shown that over time, economic poverty ravages communities in many ways. Figure 3 below shows some of the real effects of poverty upon communities in its interchanging complexities. The population of Port Richmond felt these results. Slowly are private and governmental agencies beginning to “catch up” and start to provide resources to combat these issues.

Figure 3. The Effects of Poverty



Studies have proven that the two societal factors fed by poverty as an isolated condition (which is as much a measure of wealth and access to employment opportunities as social

inclusion) are an increase in crime and a rise in teen pregnancy. (Aristotle once wrote, “Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime²²”). To name two recent findings:

- A 2014 Bureau of Justice Statistics report stated that between 2008-2012, persons living at-or-below the federal poverty rate are more than twice as likely to be victimized as those living in high-income households²³.
- A 2015 report presented by the U.S. National Library of Medicine found that for teens with a history of poverty alone, 16.8% had become pregnant at least once before their 17th birthday²⁴, with youth in foster care having twice as many adolescent pregnancies as that of the girls their age living with their parents.

Although birth rates for children born to mothers age 15-19 have fallen 9% nationally between 1991 and 2013²⁵, a 2013 NYC Human Administration Resources study²⁶ found that teenagers who live in higher poverty neighborhoods of New York are still 2.6 times more likely to experience pregnancy as compared to those who live in less impoverished areas. The study suggests several contributory reasons for this outcome, all pointing to poverty cutting off

²² Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, Book II, Section VI. Book summary online at <http://maartens.home.xs4all.nl/philosophy/aristotle/Politics/Notes/Politics%20MM%202.htm>.

²³ Erika Harrell, PhD, Lynn Langton, PhD (Bureau of Justice Statistics), Marcus Berzofsky, Lance Couzens, Hope Smiley-McDonald, PhD (RTI International), “Household Poverty and Non-Fatal Violent Victimization, 2008-2012,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, NCJ 248384 (November, 2014). <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=5137>.

²⁴ Sarah K Garwood, MD, Lara Garwood, MD, Melissa Jonson-Reid, PhD, Katie Plax, MD, and Brett Drake, PhD, “More Than Poverty—Teen Risk and Reports of Child Abuse Reports and Neglect,” U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institute of Health, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.05.004, August, 2015; 57(2): 164–168. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4653097/>.

²⁵ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “*Reproductive Health, Data and Statistics*,” https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/data_stats/index.htm.

²⁶ NYC Department of Human Resources, *Teen Pregnancy Infographic*, http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/news/campaigns/teen_pregnancy/teen_pregnancy_infographic.pdf.

access to the many resources implemented for society to thrive. It also indicates that this statistic becomes even more dire in areas of high crime, where abuse and neglect become an increasing factor in teen pregnancy.

In 2016, The Center for Community Change in Washington, D.C. published an article reviving the conversation surrounding the link between poverty, crime, and incarceration in New York City. In it, it states that “two-thirds detained in jails report annual incomes under \$12,000 prior to arrest”²⁷. That’s two-thirds of the nearly 60% of all people arrested in the five boroughs of New York in 2016, totaling 179,356 people, living below the poverty line. It’s a staggering statistic when we consider that these numbers do not include those charged with rape, murder or criminal summonses²⁸. Equally reported, the demographic makeup of these numbers disproportionately affects people of color, notably Black and Latino. Although NYC’s overall crime rate fell to 12% in 2015²⁹, the rate of crime in communities like Port Richmond has remained consistent with the rise in poverty over the years.

This intense strain on the area’s resources has at times caused tensions to flare. Beginning in 2004, Port Richmond experienced a series of attacks on Hispanic immigrants initially deemed racially motivated. These acts of violence of Hispanic immigrants committed by young Black men garnered national attention. In April alone of that year, there were 12 separate incidences, including the brutal beating of a gay couple leaving a local White Castle

²⁷ Center for Community Change, *The Relationship Between Poverty and Mass Incarceration*, https://www.masslegalservices.org/system/files/library/The_Relationship_between_Poverty_and_Mass_Incarceration.pdf.

²⁸ New York City Police Department, *Crime and Enforcement Activity in New York City*. http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/analysis_and_planning/year-end-2016-enforcement-report.pdf.

²⁹ New York Magazine, *New York City Had a Record-Low Crime Rate in 2016, But That’s Not The Story in Other Cities*, <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/01/new-york-city-had-record-low-crime-rate-in-2016.html>.

fast-food restaurant³⁰. It turned out that these attacks were deemed by police and the community to be crimes of opportunity more so than an indication of a simmering race war on Staten Island. The events caused local lawmakers and other agencies including the U.S. Department of Justice to realize that there was a need to address the spilling-over effects of poverty. It was at that time in 2004 that I, as a minister of SPBC, began my community activism on the Island, and joined these subsequent marches, sit-ins, prayer vigils, and meetings.

Qualitatively analyzing all this data, we can see a convergence of several distressing factors in the community. A dwindling economy, a reduction in services and access to wealth, an almost consistent continuance of teen pregnancies, and an influx of people shrinking spaces, caused a strain of an already pauperized infrastructure, stoking common consequences. When resources become so scarce, those most threatened are the most vulnerable among us—children of the poor, the young, the undereducated, the incarcerated and the undocumented.

As an Assistant Pastor amid this beautiful yet challenged community, I have had the privilege of working with several community partners over the years to help alleviate some of our ills. For the past almost three years I have been serving as the Chair to the Advisory Board of a facility named, “Children’s Village,” a low-security, residential program for incarcerated teen girls who are facing parole and are also wards of the state through the Administration for Children’s Services, ACS. I’ve been a Board member since the inception and opening of this facility. In this short time, they have received an increasing number of

³⁰ The Gotham Gazette. 2018. <http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/tags-opinion/583-vision-zero>.

pregnant teens who are “in the system” and preparing for release. Two years ago, there were none. Last year there was only one; at the time of this writing, there are three. They are now in the process of expanding their facilities to accommodate at least 17 more teen mothers. This increase is alarming considering Staten Island’s size; which is apparently representing a microcosm of a more significant issue occurring in the outer boroughs.

Staten Island as a project location is a particularly ripe place for several reasons. We call it the “Forgotten Borough” because state and federal resources are distributed by proportion, rendering allocation of the lion’s share given to Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx. Those of us engaged in community servicing have found that when budget reductions occur at the state level, there is a reduction in resources for Staten Island for diversion to the more dense boroughs. Simultaneously, cases from public service agencies from around NYC are often transferred into the district to alleviate the pressures of overburdened departments. Staten Island becomes the ‘dumping ground,’ while receiving fewer resources to support its caseloads. Those who are struggling on the Island are put in an even worse position.

There is another, more disturbing reason that Staten Island, particularly Port Richmond is an ideal site for this project. I mentioned earlier that according to U.S. census data, the borough has increasingly become a home to immigrants, including an ever-growing Latino immigrant population. With our current President’s fervor regarding building a wall on our Mexican border, and ostracizing people entering the U.S. from countries where the people tend to be mostly brown or Muslim, the sudden detaining and imprisonment of peoples has been increasing nationwide. Particularly for Latinos on Staten Island, this has led to widespread fear of detention, imprisonment, and deportation. People needing resources

aren't coming forward, for fear of shedding a negative spotlight on family members whose documentation isn't exactly in order. These immigrant families, who are largely living in poverty, are being made more vulnerable to the negative effects of these systems.

SPBC continues to be at the forefront of our community in partnering with other organizations to be an advocate for change and a safe-haven for those under threat. Our church is naturally the ideal setting where we will launch this public awareness campaign.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

The Challenge Statement:

As the Assistant Pastor for the past 10 years at the St. Philips Baptist Church, located in the inner-city neighborhood of Port Richmond, Staten Island, NY, I am aware of the seemingly tethered effect systemic involvement with the various forms of confinement can place upon families, particularly teen mothers age 15-19 and their children. In this demonstration project, I will create a public awareness campaign that will expose the generational, crippling outcomes distinct to this veiled community.

From Merriam-Webster's online dictionary:

teth·er ['teHər]

NOUN/VERB

1. a rope or chain with which an animal is tied to restrict its movement.
synonyms: rope · chain · cord · leash · lead · restraint · fetter · halter
2. the limit of one's strength or resources.

In the previous chapter, I wrote at length about the declining economic conditions of Port Richmond, Staten Island, the location of this project. Also, I briefly provided statistics regarding poverty, crime and teen pregnancy. These findings, though complex and involving many variables, are not new. However, there is an often under-reported struggle nestled within these numbers, and that is daily life for poor, non-incarcerated teen mothers juggling their connections to jails and motherhood.

Some statistics provide a sense of the issue. For example, in 2013 over 273,000 babies were born in the U.S. to teens mothers between the ages of 15 through 19³¹. In that same year, there were 6 million people serving sentences in U.S. prisons³², with 2.7 million children under the age of 18 having at least one parent in jail³³. These numbers and the subsequent quantitative data associated with these statistics suggest the potential overlapping of conditions, as these teens are statistically likely to be parented by someone incarcerated at some point in their lifetime because of the separate yet influencing factors of their existence and that is mostly being poor and mostly being a minority. It is worth noting that since 1990, nationally, pregnancy rates for teens between the ages of 16 and 19 have decreased by 30%³⁴. Before we celebrate, it is also worth noting that the birthrate for teens in the U.S. is still higher than that of any other developed country³⁵. In 2013 alone, there were still 26.5 live births for every 1,000 young women between the ages of 15-19—as stated above, that is 273,105 American babies³⁶ born to girls still in high school, *and these are not all first births*. Comparatively, teens who live in the most deprived neighborhoods are 2.6 times more likely to become pregnant³⁷, with 16% being African American, and 17% being Hispanic; twice as many as their White counterparts³⁸. If you are a teenager in the U.S., and you are of color,

³¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Trends in Teen Pregnancy and Childbearing,” Office of Adolescent Health, Rockville, MD, 2015.

³² Business Insider, “There Are Now More Americans In Jail Than There Were in Stalin’s Gulag Archipelago,” by Henry Blodget. March, 2012. <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-many-americans-in-jail-2012-3>.

³³ Pew Research Center, “Sesame Street Reaches Out to 2.7 Million American Children With an Incarcerated Parent”, by Katie Riley. June, 2013. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/21/sesame-street-reaches-out-to-2-7-million-american-children-with-an-incarcerated-parent/>.

³⁴ New York City Human Resources Administration, “Health Department Data Shows Steady Decline In Teen Pregnancy Rate,” May, 2013.

³⁵ New York City Human Resources Administration, Ibid.

³⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Trends in Teen Pregnancy and Childbearing,” Office of Adolescent Health, Rockville, MD, 2015.

³⁷ New York City Human Resources Administration, Ibid.

³⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Ibid.

and you happen to be poor, statistically, you are twice as likely to become pregnant before your 20th birthday. Subsequently, your contribution to elevating your family beyond its current condition becomes that much harder. A 2013 report issued by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) stated that in the U.S. only 30% of teen mothers achieve their high school diplomas³⁹. The same study reported that of that number, less than 2% complete college by the time they are 30⁴⁰ and that their children are 50% more likely to repeat a grade and eventually drop out⁴¹. This was the finding a mere five years ago. More recent studies suggest that the reason for this goes beyond the difficulties of balancing child rearing and education⁴², but that teen mothers have the added pressures of remaining engaged in the areas that bring about their success, including positive peer relationships, after-school developmental activities, and the like. However, there's more.

In the U.S., public and private entities have used the justice system to ravage our most impoverished communities, prospering from mass incarceration; a phenomenon highlighted most recently by author Michelle Alexander in her ground-breaking book, "The New Jim Crow." African Americans, including youth offenders, are five times more likely to be confined and found guilty of almost the same crimes as those committed by their White counterparts⁴³. Hispanic youth are three times as likely to be incarcerated for the same crimes

³⁹ National Conference of State Legislatures, "Post Card: Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates," <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-pregnancy-affects-graduation-rates-postcard.aspx#1>.

⁴⁰ National Conference of State Legislatures, Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Olivia Marshall, "The Dropout Crisis and Teen Pregnancy," <http://www.progressivepolicy.org/blog/the-drop-out-crisis-and-teen-pregnancy/>.

⁴³ Olivia Marshall, "The Dropout Crisis and Teen Pregnancy." Ibid.

as Whites⁴⁴. This problem continues and is frighteningly relevant when we consider our current president's policy of detention, confinement, and deportation of illegal immigrants.

THE EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION ON U.S. KIDS

As the population of our jails increase and more and more families are being challenged to endure prison sentences, social scientists began to examine the effect of incarceration on our most vulnerable members—our children. With children having children, the finding of these studies takes on a whole new dimension.

At the Urban Institute, National Policy Conference in 1991, it was reported that in that year, there were 452,500 parents in state and federal prisons, leaving behind 936,500 minor children in the U.S.⁴⁵ By the year 2000, the number of parents in jail had skyrocketed to 737,400, the guardians of 1,531,500 minor children⁴⁶. Of that number, 47% of those parents in state prisons and 49% in federal prisons were African American; 19% in state and 30% in federal lock-ups were Hispanic. (White parents serving sentences in state prisons at that time comprised 29% of the prison population, 22% of the federal prison population⁴⁷.) In the year 2000, 7% of all African American children, 3% of all Hispanic children and 1% of all White children in the U.S. had at least one parent in prison⁴⁸. In 90% of those instances, it is the father confined, leaving the adult mother to shoulder the caregiving burden⁴⁹. However, when the mother is imprisoned, studies found that in that year, fathers assume this responsibility

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ross D. Parke and K. Alison Clark-Stewart, "From Prison to Home: The Effects of Incarceration & Reentry on Children, Families and Communities" in *Effects of Parental Incarceration on Young Children*, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, The Urban Institute National Policy Conference, December, 2001. 1.

⁴⁶ Ross D. Parke and K. Alison Clark-Stewart, "From Prison to Home: The Effects of Incarceration," Ibid. 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

only 28-31% of the time, leaving the responsibility to fall on a relative, more traditionally a grandparent⁵⁰. Friends only do so 10-12% of the time⁵¹. This disruption of the family stability, including visits to prison facilities in an attempt to keep the incarcerated parent connected to the child's life, has been proven to become detrimental to the child's overall well-being potentially. These effects become manifested and become apparent over time.

School-aged children of incarcerated have been reported to exhibit the following behaviors⁵²:

- 70% of children whose mother were incarcerated were prone to emotional and psychological problems
- Boys tend to display more external emotional problems like anger, aggression, and hostility towards secondary caregivers, siblings, and school staff
- Girls display more internal emotional problems like withdrawal, shame, anxiety attacks, eating disorders, guilt, depression, and hypervigilance
- 50% had reduced grades, were prone to aggressive outbursts and had other school-related discipline issues
- Of children age 6-8, 16% express phobias associated with attending school, including frequent unwillingness to participate for sometimes 4-6 weeks after their parents' incarceration
- In a study of 166 children whose mother were incarcerated, 70% performed poorly academically

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. 6.

- Children of incarcerated parents are often bullied and ostracized by the other children
- As the age of the child increases, suspensions and dropout rates increase.

Although many of these effects are temporary, the event of parental incarceration is proven to be a critical event that affects a child over time. Figure 4 and Chart 4 below list new daily struggles often experienced by children of an incarcerated parent. Without intervention from a robust secondary support system or the appropriate redirection of anxiety from an agent associated with the penal system, these physical and emotional effects on a child can be significant to their inability to rise above these outcomes.

Figure 4. Effects of Parental Incarceration

Children of incarcerated parents are:

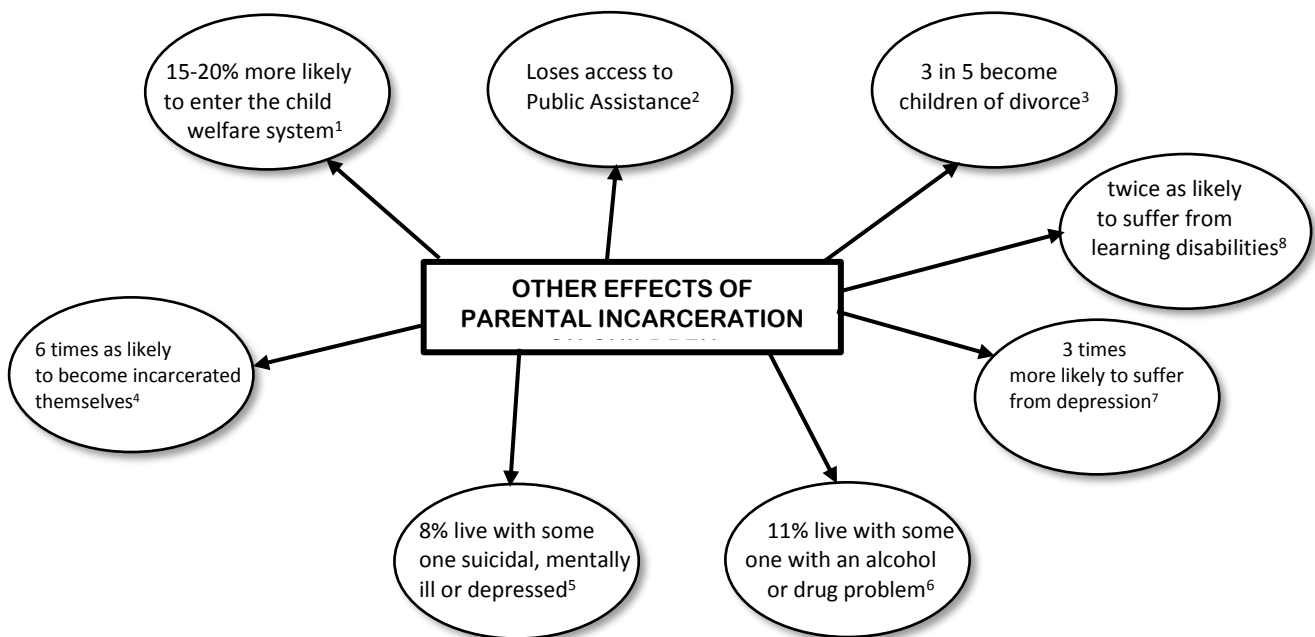


Chart 4. Child Reactions to Parental Incarceration

- Identification with the incarcerated parent, awareness of social stigma
- Change in future orientation and intrusive thoughts about their parents
- Concern about outcomes of case, unsure and worried about how to live without mother, concern about an uncertain future
- Flashbacks to traumatic events related to arrests
- Embarrassment and anger
- Fear, sadness, loneliness, guilt, low self-esteem, depression, emotional withdrawal from friends and family
- Separation anxiety and fears of abandonment
- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Aggression, anxiety and hyperarousal, attention disorders and developmental regression
- Physical aggression, withdrawal, acting out, academic and classroom behavior difficulties, truancy.

For this project, I partnered with three teen mothers living through the systems of incarceration to gain their direct account of their daily realities (see Chapter 4: Implementation of the Project). Each subject had a singularly common complaint which was that the effect of prison visits for them was, in their words, “traumatic,” for a myriad of relatively understandable as well as complicated reasons. Because these subjects are not long removed from adolescence themselves, their situation warrants a study of the effects of trauma on children, if not for themselves alone, but for the possible effects experienced by the children born to these teens participating in this cycle along with them.

Before we can honestly examine the trauma teen mothers experience during visits to detention centers, it is worth noting that studies suggest that aside from standard sexual curiosity, teen pregnancy is often the direct result of some other, earlier childhood adversity. The effects of these events become compounded in a profound way when that struggling teen is exposed to the events of the incarceration, as some are (including the possible witnessing of their parent or mate being seized). Psychologists and medical doctors have named this “Toxic

Stress⁵³,” and have defined it as the condition a child suffer when he or she “experiences strong, frequent, and prolonged adversity without enough adult support.” Toxic stress “can lead to permanent changes in the development of the brain causing psychological and physical damage⁵⁴.” These effects can be both short and long-term. Appropriate intervention from a healthy support system that teaches the child how to respond to this physical and emotional stress healthily has been proven to reverse the effects of the trauma, thereby reducing the possible negative tethering associated with exposure to prison systems. In the right environment, children are brought back to their more productive selves. However, when these situations in children are not appropriately mitigated, these adverse outcomes can continue into adulthood.

Reported in a 2012 study issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics, many diseases found in adults “should be viewed as developmental disorders that begin early in life and that persistent health disparities associated with poverty, discrimination, or maltreatment could be reduced by alleviating toxic stress in childhood⁵⁵. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) reported that toxic stress of very young children could have a profound medical effect on their developing bodies. According to their report, since this type of study began in the late 19th century, human development was understood to be determined as “nature versus nurture⁵⁶.” However, by the end of the 20th century, they revised their position and stated that human development should more accurately be understood as “nature dancing

⁵³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report of Early Childhood Adversity*, Washington, D.C. 2018. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/initiatives/early-adversity>.

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ American Academy of Pediatrics, *The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress*. Elk Grove Village, Illinois. 2012. E232.

⁵⁶ American Academy of Pediatrics, *Ibid*.

with nurture over time⁵⁷.” The reason is their research found that there are “millennial morbidities⁵⁸,” or more recently discovered and increasingly complex mental health concerns facing children, whose threat to the child’s well-being creates “overlapping and synergistic characteristics of the most prevalent conditions⁵⁹,” that tend to be more mood-altering than once thought. These events are a direct result of early childhood trauma. To state simply, they have found that beginning prenatally and continuing through infancy into childhood; physical development is believed to be driven by an intricate and “inextricable interaction between biology (as defined by genetic predispositions) and ecology (as defined by the social and physical environment)⁶⁰.” These shifts begin in the womb, as the mother herself experiences ecological or environmental stresses. The depth of the effect then becomes two-fold and a repetitive cycle. “Adverse Childhood Experiences (or ACE’s⁶¹)”, otherwise known as significant stress—toxic stress—in the lives of young children, even a single event, is viewed as a risk factor for the beginning of health-threatening behaviors, as well as a catalyst for physiologic responses that can lay the groundwork for chronic, stress-related diseases later in their lives. Setting aside genetic makeups, scientists believe that stress that is severe enough in developing children can cause a disruption in the circuitry of the brain, causing a modification in the area of the DNA structure that controls neuroendocrine responses, or how a person reacts to stress, how one assessing context, and one’s potential propensity to exhibit anxiety in the future⁶². (Note: More than half of the children who witness the traumatic event

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid. E233.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

of parental arrest are under seven years of age⁶³). This maladjusted wiring, so to speak, that occurs at the age where the child's brain is developing the most can affect a person's ability learn, their future behavior, and also their overall mental stability⁶⁴. The AAP study found that these response malformations can be transferred to the next generation, who, for our focus demographic might already be experiencing such stress firsthand.

The AAP also reviewed 58 years of published studies and found that "population-based" stresses (excessive television watching, too many fast food restaurants and liquor stores in a particular radius, too few fresh fruit markets or outlets for physical activity) create similarly increasingly complex mental health issues in children⁶⁵. These population-based types of stresses are found more prevalent along racial lines. In their report, they cite "racial and ethnic disparities in children's health to be extensive, pervasive, persistent, and, in some cases, worsening⁶⁶. The rise in incarceration along racial and ethnic lines might have a direct impact on this finding. One study conducted in 1998 estimated that of the parents arrested in that year in the U.S.⁶⁷:

- o 67% were handcuffed in front of their children
- o 27% reported weapons drawn in front of their children
- o 4.3% reported a physical struggle
- o 3.2% reported the use of pepper spray

⁶³ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, The Urban Institute National Policy Conference, "From Prison to Home: The Effects of Incarceration & Reentry on Children, Families and Communities", Ibid. 4.

⁶⁴ T.L. Roth, F.D. Lubin, A.J. Funk and J.D. Sweatt, "Lasting Epigenetic Influence of Early-Life Adversity on the BDNF Gene" in *Biological Psychiatry*, (2009); 65(9):760-769.

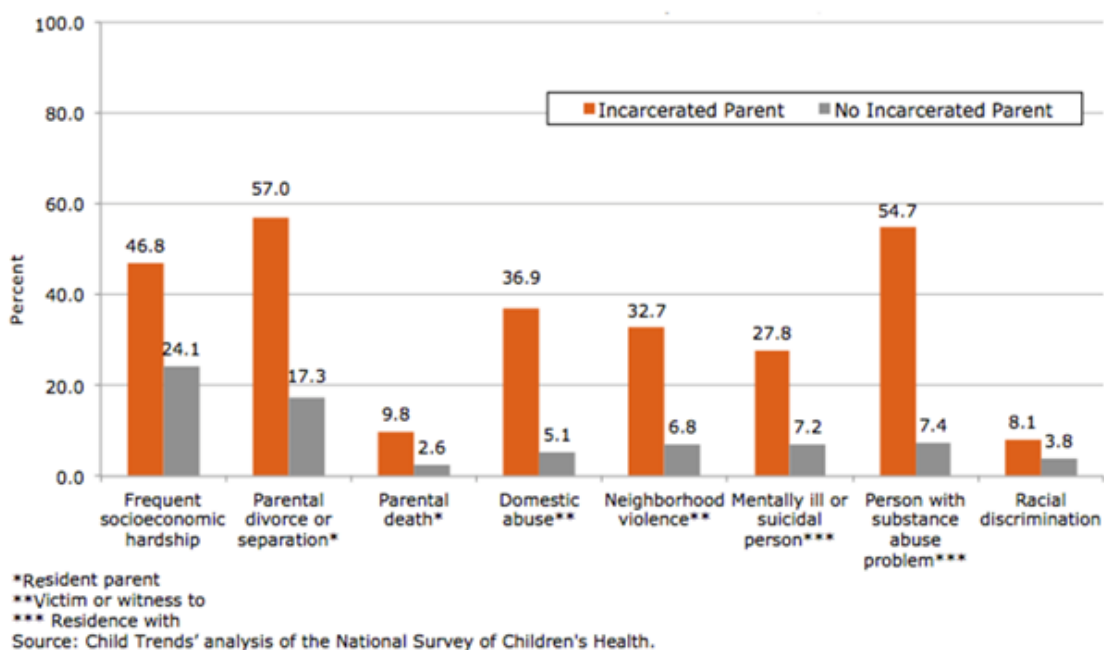
⁶⁵ American Academy of Pediatrics, Ibid. E233.

⁶⁶ American Academy of Pediatrics. Committee on Pediatric Research. "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Health and Health Care of Children" in *Pediatrics*. 2010;125(4). <http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/>.

⁶⁷ American Academy of Pediatrics. Committee on Pediatric Research. Ibid.

That is a significant amount of stress witnessed by our nation's children. Chart 5 shows additional ACE's associated with parental incarceration.

Chart 5. Parental Incarceration is Associated With Numerous Other Adverse Childhood Experiences, 2011-2012



With 58% of children of incarcerated parents being under the age of 10 (8 years-old being the mean age⁶⁸) the probability of there being a child of a teenage mother nestled in those numbers is great. As she endures from a young person's perspective the toxicity of navigating life disruptions because of parental or partner imprisonment, if experienced during pregnancy,

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, The Urban Institute National Policy Conference, "From Prison to Home: The Effects of Incarceration & Reentry on Children, Families and Communities", Ibid. 2.

the child has the potential to being exposed to physiological maladjustments later in life. If these events occur after the child is born, then exposure to the same stress has a similar effect on the child's developing body.

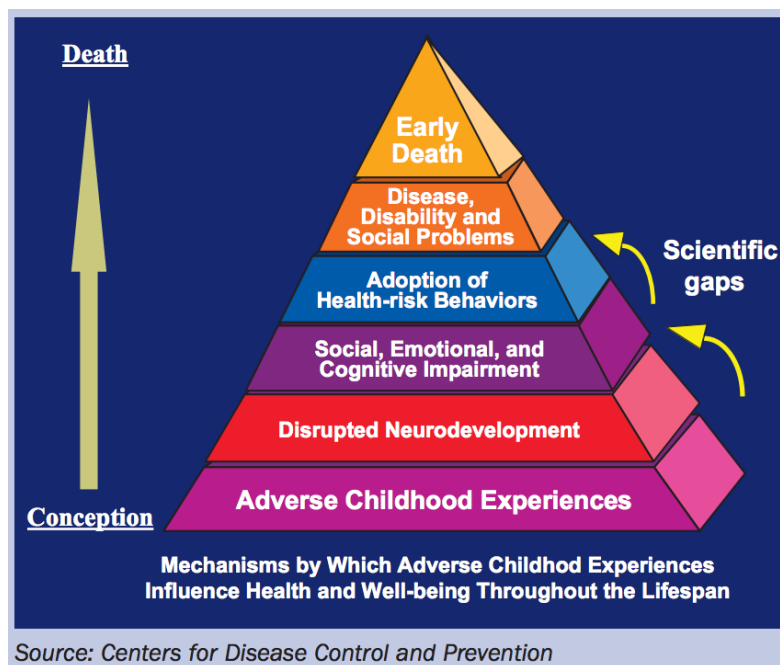
Toxic stress has the almost same effect on a child's development as child abuse and neglect. Studies have found that even one such event can cause this disruption in neurologic impulses, but a caring and nurturing caregiver can revert these impulses and return these internal systems to their normal state. If the teen mother, who herself is not within her final stage of development, not is therefore not in an emotional position to aggressively counter these factors with a positive redirection of those stresses, then traits of these effects tend to repeat in the next generation. The key to stopping this process, scientists have found, is the strengthening of the caregiver most connected to the traumatized child, typically their parent. However, if their parent is still in high school and themselves traumatized by ethnic, economic and psychological ecologies statistically typical of teen mothers, the results are sure to continue. Studies show that these positive responses are more likely to come from an adult, and that "When buffered by an environment of stable and supportive relationships, positive stress responses are a growth-promoting element of normal development⁶⁹." Lastly, the AAP also made a profound prediction when its authors of the report wrote concerning the effects of racial and ethnic disparages on children that, "such deepened early stress on children is a threat to our country's democracy, as it stifles our standard of equal opportunity for all because of race⁷⁰." "Alterations in a child's ecology can have measurable effects on his or her

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ American Academy of Pediatrics. Ibid.

developmental trajectory, with lifelong consequences for educational achievement, economic productivity, health status, and longevity⁷¹.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention arrived at that same conclusion after its study of the topic (Chart 6).

Chart 6. Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan



In addition to halting the physiological deterioration of generations, as a society, we should want to produce a well-educated and healthy adult population that is sufficiently skilled to efficiently participate in a global economy and become jointly responsible stakeholders and productive members of society. To date, I have not been able to find a single agency dedicated to helping specifically teen mothers who are navigating prison systems. Although there are organizations such as *The After School Alliance* (a national organization

⁷¹ American Academy of Pediatrics, *The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress*. Ibid. E234.

“committed to ensuring that all children have access to affordable, quality after-school programs⁷²”), *Future Without Violence* (formerly called “Family Violence Prevention Fund”, committed to ending violence against women and children globally⁷³), and *Safe Horizon* (a victims advocacy service aimed at helping children, adults and families affected by crime and abuse in New York City and provide resources for those outside of the City⁷⁴”, not even these cater specifically to the needs of a teen mother who herself is not under confinement.

Paralleling the seemingly unrelated findings of race, poverty, incarceration, and motherhood, we can connect the evidentiary threads of physiological disruptions that perpetuates this fate. The effects upon these babies enwrapped in the tentacles of a system that has separatism and penalty as its foundation are real. We wonder why the cycle continues. I do not wonder; I see it as a preventable process.

In 2009, my sister’s oldest son was sentenced to seven years in federal prison for his participation in an interstate armed robbery of a jewelry store. At the time, his son was only 1½ years old, and his son’s mother was 18. Over the period of his incarceration, I witnessed the mother, along with her friends in similar conditions, struggle with single parenting, long bus rides and an invasion of dignity common to prison visits. I witnessed the acting out of their children, the premature birth, and the mental and physical stress of having too much responsibility too soon. I saw the battles between feeding the child versus replenishing commissary allotments, and progressive hopelessness over relief out of that daily grind—all with the nagging uncertainty that the relationship, in its original state, would resume upon her loved one’s release. However, what I also witnessed over the years was how young

⁷² The After-School Alliance, 2018. <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/myCommunityFind.cfm>.

⁷³ Future Without Violence, 2018. <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/>.

⁷⁴ Safe Horizon, 2018. <http://www.safehorizon.org/index/about-us-1.html>.

mothers like her, in similar circumstances but with differing relational ties, forged a close-knit group that supported each other through their most profound obstacles. They were each other's babysitters, sources of outside income and information, and so much more. They lifted each other because they were in the trenches together, fighting their war side by side, sometimes winning and sometimes losing, making mistakes, and not understanding it all. The system was not always kind. So where does this cycle leave them? Where does it leave the children born in this setting? Common interest with shared resources by any other name is a *congregation*, so strategies beneficial to congregations must be the key to transforming this group.

Growing up in Brownsville, Brooklyn (a neighborhood in many ways resembling Port Richmond), and pastoring for the past ten years in the 3rd most impoverished section of Staten Island, I have seen these girls in their struggle. I know these girls. They are loyal to their plight. It is my goal that in this project, what will emerge will be a reimaging of the presence of God within some of the most forgotten members of our community. I intend for this public awareness campaign to make this unique group more visible, to encourage greater access to the primary resources teen mothers and their children need to grow beyond their statistical fates. Much like the Untouchables of India, this is a group that hides in plain sight, living on the fringes of our society. I intend this not to be a conversation about welfare, but instead, encourage a significant shift in public policy regarding incarceration and babies.

CHAPTER 3

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

In my project proposal, I outlined three goals I had planned to execute to raise the level of consciousness of not only this target group but oppressed peoples in general. Following are the outcomes of those goals and strategies.

Goal 1: *Awareness in the Community*

To raise awareness of marginalized groups living within the primary structure, I endeavored to create an avenue whereby the community of St. Philips Baptist Church would exegete scriptures in a way that would provide an increased knowledge of the biblical impetus for our corporate involvement in alleviating their oppression. Said plainly, I created a platform identifying the “other” within the narratives, and then provided an answer as to how the scriptures suggest we should respond as the body of Christ.

The first strategy implemented was the creation of a Bible study curriculum detailing daily life for the powerless navigating military oppression, which was the topic more closely aligned to our current focus. Using primarily Dr. Obery Hendrick’s book, “The Politics of Jesus Christ⁷⁵” along with strategies from “The Release of the Spirit” by the Chinese theologian Watchman Nee, I created a 9-month, weekly bible study intensive. The classes were at St. Philips Baptist Church during the normal evening Bible Study hour (note: I am the regular instructor for this class). In it, we studied an exegetical analysis of group

⁷⁵ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus’ Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York, NY: Three Leaves Press, 2006).

oppression before and during the emergence of the earthly ministry of Jesus, and how those ideas circulating during that time were a threat to the status quo. I detailed life for 1st century Semitic Jews and how being vassals to the Roman government created not just marginalization, but real military oppression. We also examined the hardships inflicted upon the sufferers by their religious structures [for an example of the lecture, see ATTACHMENT A below.] I was able to display these complex relationships using the “7 strategies of Jesus⁷⁶” detailed in Dr. Hendrick’s book. They are:

- 1) Treat the People’s Needs as Holy
- 2) Give a Voice to the Voiceless
- 3) Expose the Workings of Oppression
- 4) Call the Demon by Name
- 5) Save Your Anger for the Mistreatment of Others
- 6) Take Blows Without Returning Them
- 7) Don’t Just Explain the Alternative, Show It

⁷⁶ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *Politics of Jesus*, Ibid., 101-188.

ATTACHMENT A

St. Philips Baptist Church Evening Bible Study

September 14, 2016

The Politics of Jesus

Jesus was a political revolutionary. Jesus took action as a tool for teaching/discipling.

- 1) First, he communicated that the plight of Jews was not just an unfortunate unfolding of the natural scheme of things; it was unjust and against the law of God.
- 2) Jesus' second point was that his hearers should not passively comply with unjust practices. Rather than accept the unjust status quo, they should protest the injustice of forced impoverishment.

He was not only the Messiah, but a master tactician: Here are the political strategies of Jesus:

Strategy One: Treat the People's Needs as Holy

Based on Matthew 6:9-13 (Lord's Prayer); Our Father (who art in heaven). Despite Jesus' own unique relationship to God, he preached that God was the Lord and father of everyone. Because He knew God as the Father of all humanity, Jesus ministered not only to poor Jews like himself, but to Samaritans, to the rich, even to Romans. *What implications does that understanding hold for us today? Give me an example.*

Your kingdom come, Your will be done. Jesus not only preached the primacy of the kingdom, or sole sovereignty, of God, he demonstrated it. This is reflected first by the very act of teaching that Caesar's kingdom must come to an end. Also, Jesus' total dedication to God as Sovereign is seen in his refusal to accept the kingship so enthusiastically conferred upon him by 5,000 fellows (John 6) The kingdom of which Jesus speaks is none other than the kingdom of God, or in Hebrew, the *Malkuth shamayim*, the acknowledgement that only God is worthy of worship, and no other. No emperor, no king.

Strategy Two: Give a Voice to the Voiceless

Based on Mark 11:15-19

Key Point:

Strategy Three: Expose the Workings of Oppression

Based on Matthew 20:1-6

Key Point:

Strategy Four: Call the Demon by Name (Individual vs. Collective Presence)

Based on Mark 5:1-10

Key Point:

Strategy Five: Save Your Anger for the Mistreatment of Others

Based on Mark 1:40-45

Key Point:

Strategy Six: Take Blows Without Returning Them

Based on Matthew 5:38-41

Key Point:

Strategy Seven: Don't Just Explain the Alternative, Show It

Based on John 6:1-15

Key Point:

Next lesson: The Politics of Jesus in Today's Society

With these strategies, we learned the historical and biblical imperatives for identifying and responding to the needs of the oppressed in our society. Also, we examined the notion that we participate in our own oppression [for historical and contemporary study, the class worked through the spreadsheet below, ATTACHMENT B].

St. Philips Baptist Church Evening Bible Study

September 14, 2016

The Politics of Jesus

Jesus was a political revolutionary. Jesus took action as a tool for teaching/discipling.

- 1) First, he communicated that the plight of Jews was not just an unfortunate unfolding of the natural scheme of things; it was unjust and against the law of God.
- 2) Jesus' second point was that his hearers should not passively comply with unjust practices. Rather than accept the unjust status quo, they should protest the injustice of forced impoverishment.

	In History	In Community	Personal (Justification, Sanctification, Salvation)
Strategy One: Treat the People's Needs as Holy Based on Matthew 6:9-13 (Lord's Prayer)			
Strategy Two: Give a Voice to the Voiceless Based on Mark 11:15-19			
Strategy Three: Expose the Workings of Oppression Based on Matthew 20:1-6			
Strategy Four: Call the Demon by Name (Individual vs. Collective Presence) Based on Mark 5:1-10			
Strategy Five: Save Your Anger for the Mistreatment of Others Based on Mark 1:40-45			
Strategy Six: Take Blows Without Returning Them Based on Matthew 5:38-41			
Strategy Seven: Don't Just Explain the Alternative, Show It Based on John 6:1-15			

Additionally, the political Jesus as displayed in Dr. Hendrick's work and many others was wholly human and wholly divine. It was a part of Jesus' consciousness. In the bible study I created, I suggested that advocating for the marginalized should likewise be a part of the believer's consciousness. To teach how to do this, I integrated the core principals found in "The Release of the Spirit."

Through the works of Watchman Nee, we learn that "brokenness," as he sees it, is not only a useful tool, but it is in line with the principles of God. I incorporated the thought as imperative to truly living out the biblical principles of seven strategies of Jesus detailed by Dr. Hendricks. As detailed in the book, humanity is triune: spirit, soul, and body (following 1 Thessalonians 5:23). One's spirit, or the "Inward" person, is encased by one's soul, the "Outer" person, which is further encased by the body, or the "Outermost" person. Based on biblical principles, humanity is only able to truly exercise the directives of God (such as seeing and responding to the need in others) when the Holy Spirit so transforms the human spirit (Inward person) that it "breaks through" or pierces into the soul—the intangible, intellectual part of us (the Outer person). As the transformation continues, the elevated soul then pierces the body (or Outermost person)—in an inward-outward sort of movement. Once this inward breaking takes place, it is then that our touch, our thoughts, our advocacy has an effect and produces a real Christ-like change in the world. My suggestion with this lesson was that it was only through the process of this "breaking" that we can truly identify the oppressed and respond in a transformative way. In our willingness to serve as a conduit for the Holy Spirit in this manner, we not only help someone less fortunate, but we are made "Whole," as understood by the ancient Greek interpretation of the combination of "healing" and "wellness." For a sampling of this course material, see ATTACHMENT C.

ATTACHMENT C

St. Philips Baptist Church Evening Bible Study

February 8, 2017

Lecture Series: “Healing vs. Wellness”

Previously, we examined the politics of the radical Jesus Christ and the seven strategies He used throughout His earthly ministry:

Strategy One: Treat the People’s Needs as Holy

Based on Matthew 6:9-13

(Lord’s Prayer)

Strategy Two: Give a Voice to the Voiceless

Based on Mark 11:15-19

Strategy Three: Expose the Workings of Oppression

Based on Matthew 20:1-6

Strategy Four: Call the Demon by Name (Individual vs. Collective Presence)

Based on Mark 5:1-10

Strategy Five: Save Your Anger for the Mistreatment of Others

Based on Mark 1:40-45

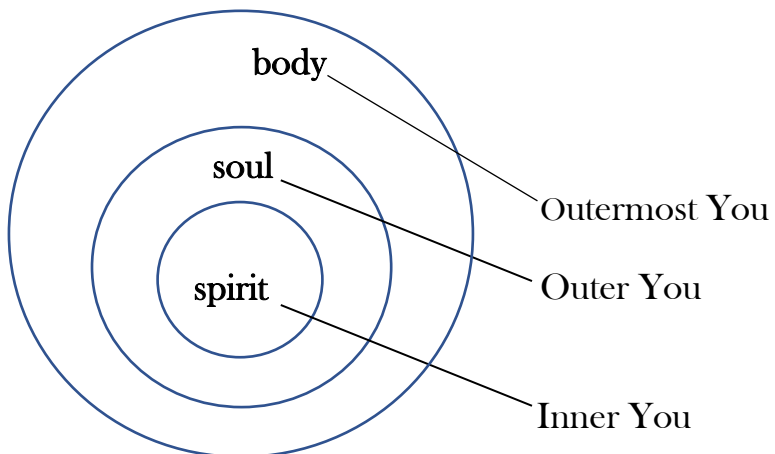
Strategy Six: Take Blows Without Returning Them

Based on Matthew 5:38-41

Strategy Seven: Don’t Just Explain the Alternative, Show It

Based on John 6:1-15

Then we examined how it is truly only possible to affect these strategies when we have a breaking of the spirit:



Using this diagram, the Inner You, your spirit, is encased by the Outer You (your soul), which is housed by the Outermost You (the body).

Now, let's focus on how the



is affected.

Let's discuss:

- 1) How would you think sickness or disease (a need for healing) affects our spirit? Can it? How should it? Leviticus 13; Deuteronomy 29:22; Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 4:23, 24; Mark 1:41* (& Matthew 14:14); John 10:37, 38 (so that we would know that He and the Father are one)
- 2) What does it mean to "carry our cross?" 2 Corinthians 4:16, 17; Philippians 3:10

In his book entitled, "Healing," Dr. Francis MacNutt writes, *"The larger issues of injustice will be helped when individuals in society are themselves made whole—when they are healed emotionally so that they can enter into healthy relationships, so that they are not acting out of their own prejudice or ancient hurts."*⁷⁷

Justice cannot be brought to society until there are just people and people cannot be just until healed of the hurts and wounds of the past. So are we treated (well); are we whole?

With this lecture series, we will study the following:

- 1) The dynamics of healing through prayer;
- 2) How to transform individuals into a real personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the baptism of the Spirit;
- 3) How to heal relationships and to build community—especially in the family and the neighborhood;
- 4) How to transform society by repairing relationships of injustice and oppression.

WHAT IS HEALING? Greek: *iaomai*: to heal

Original Word: *ἰάομαι*

Part of Speech: Verb

Phonetic Spelling: (ee-ah'-om-ahee)

Short Definition: I heal

Definition: I heal, generally of the physical, sometimes of spiritual, disease.

2390 *íāomai* (a primitive verb, *NAS* dictionary) – *healing*, particularly as *supernatural* and *bringing attention to the Lord Himself as the Great Physician* (cf. Is 53:4,5).

⁷⁷ MacNutt, Francis, "Healing," 24th edition, Ave Maria Press: Indiana, 2009, p. 21 (underlines added).

WHAT IS WELLNESS?

Greek: sózō: to save

Original Word: σῴζω

Part of Speech: Verb

Phonetic Spelling: (sode'-zo)

Short Definition: I save, heal; to be made well

Definition: I save, heal, preserve, rescue.

4982 *sōzō* (from *sōs*, "safe, rescued") – properly, *deliver* out of danger and *into safety*; used principally of God *rescuing* believers *from* the penalty and power of sin – *and into His provisions (safety)*.

WHAT IS WHOLENESS?

Greek: hugiés: sound, whole, healthy

Original Word: ὑγιής, ἐς

Part of Speech: Adjective

Phonetic Spelling: (hoog-ee-ace')

Short Definition: sound, whole, wholesome

5199 Definition: (a) sound, healthy, pure, whole, (b) wholesome. Well in the body; uncorrupt, true in doctrine.

Instructor's notes:

9/21/16 – Title: Are We Whole, Are We Healed, or Are We Well? I contend that we're a bunch of broken (sick) people, dealing daily with broken (sick) people, while trying to heal broken (sick) people.

What did sickness mean to Old Testament Hebrews?

- The Hebrews did not think of human beings as being divided into body and soul, but as whole persons. When they spoke of salvation, they thought not only of saving souls but of healing persons. And our person includes our body, our feelings, and our spirits. [Refer to Nee's diagram.] Again, this is not an either/or question. We need to work at healing on *all* levels—and by all possible means: political, economic, *and* by prayer.

So for some of us, when we're not well in the world, we're not well in our person (i.e. Martin Luther King and injustice; Mother Teresa and the poor of Calcutta)

9/28/16: Title: What's Needed for Wholeness

Of healing, wellness, or wholeness, which is more desirable to the kingdom?

Healed + Well = Whole Continue reading biblical reference scriptures on healing; read Greek definitions of healing.

Matt. 15:31; Mark 5:34* (same word 5199); John 5:11; John 5:14-15

This is what's needed (p.22, 23):

- Transformation of individuals. We should all pray for inner healing and knowing Jesus in a newer, deeper, closer way that healing had become secondary.
- Interior transformation (inner healing). We must be healed of wounds of the past.
- Physical healing: A God of love is hard for the people to see without the kind of healing ministry Jesus Himself exercised. Think of revival service. Do you believe there is such people as faith healers?

Hindrances to physical healing:

- 1) Belief. Do you believe there is such a thing as faith healers? Many have given the gift a bad name.
- 2) Fatalistic view of God. Increasing number of people who have the fatalistic view to let God take action without any initiative on their part to improve their situation (like visiting the doctor).
- 3) Confusion. Confusion in people's minds which connects healing to witch doctors, and other forms of superstitions.
- 4) Reaction to holiness. General reaction against old church piety which emphasized prayer, shrines, other-worldly attitudes ("spiritual" movement).

During the 36 weeks of the Bible study, several groups attended the lesson, including community partners and a member of my site team. Before conducting the classes, I created a pre- and post-Bible study questionnaire. This was done to assess better the effectiveness of the course for raising awareness. Following are the results of the completed surveys received from approximately 70% of the attendants:

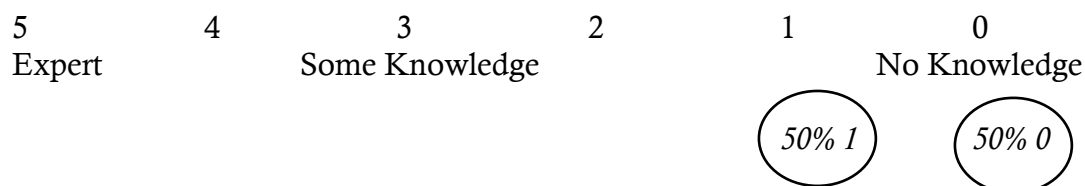
ATTACHMENT D

St. Philips Baptist Church Evening Bible Study

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain your knowledge of the Bible Study *The Politics of Jesus Christ and Healing vs. Wellness*. It is for informational purposes only but may be included in my doctoral presentation. Please answer fully and to the best of your ability.

RESULTS ONLY (70% respondents)

Please rate your general knowledge of the subject (the radical Jesus) prior to the class?



Did you gain skills on how to read the bible differently?



Prior to the bible study, were you aware of the oppression of groups in the scriptures?



Prior to the bible study, were you aware of the political nature of the human Jesus Christ?



Did you gain knowledge of the biblical response of Jesus' regarding the oppressed?

Yes ☒ 100% No

Since the bible study, do you have a greater sense of our collective responsibility to identify the oppressed?

Yes ☒ 100% No

Since the bible study, are you better able to identify an oppressed group?

Yes ☒ 100% No

Since the bible study, are you more inclined to speak up for someone you feel is being oppressed?

Yes ☒ 100% No

Because of what you learned in the bible study, are you more willing to help the oppressed?

Yes ☒ 100% No

Since the bible study, do you have a basic understanding of the term *Malkuth Shamayim*?"
Do you feel you can achieve "Wellness" by helping others?

Yes ☒ 100% No

Did you have an understanding of *Malkuth Shamayim* prior to the bible study?

Yes No ☒ 100%

What is your overall view of the bible study?

Extremely Favorable ☒ 100% Favorable Moderately Favorable Unfavorable

Would you recommend this course of study to others?

Yes ☒ 100% No ☐

Do you give permission for the results of this questionnaire to be published anonymously?

Yes ☒ 100% No ☐

Thank you for your submission.

In summary:

- 100% of respondents said that they had no little to no knowledge of the radical Jesus prior to the class.
- 100% of respondents said that they gained skills to reading the Bible differently
- 50% said that they had noticed oppressed groups in the scriptures prior to the class.
- 100% said they were unaware of the political Jesus Christ prior to the class.
- 100% said that because of the class they know the historical Jesus' response to the oppressed.
- 100% said that since the class they are better able to not only identify and oppressed group but advocate for them.
- 100% said that because of the class they are willing to help the oppressed.

The results of the questionnaires suggest that the bible study was quite useful in not only raising the awareness of oppressed groups and oppression in the scriptures but also our biblical imperative as to how we ought to respond to this awakening.

Goal 2: *Subject Interviews*

The qualitative analysis for this goal began with the identification and recruitment of 3 teen mothers comprised of my target group partnering with the project and sharing their experiences.

To start, I admit that it was challenging connecting with non-incarcerated teen mothers age 15-19 who face the systems of incarceration. There are agencies such as “The Door” that provides help for troubled teens and “Covenant House” who assists homeless teen mothers, but none of the agencies I found in or near New York could determine if any of their clients had any involvement with the penal system. I was able to find and interview three young ladies that fit this narrow parameter. However, to be completely transparent, one of the teens was an acquaintance of a family member; the other two had been incarcerated themselves and were introduced to me as residents of The Children’s Village⁷⁸ (see Chapter 1). Following are the notes of one of those interviews (ATTACHMENT E). I included the notes from only one meeting because the sentiments for all three were quite similar. These were the most detailed and expressive.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 1: “Introduction to the Setting,” page 4.

ATTACHMENT E

The Interview of Teen Mothers Navigating Prison Systems

Interviewer: Agnes McBeth; Doctor of Ministry Candidate

Subject: [identity withheld], Interview #2

Date: 3/11/17, noon

Place: St. Philips Baptist Church Fellowship Hall,
87 Bennett Street, Staten Island, NY

How old were you when you first started taking the baby to the prison? How old was the baby?
She was 17; the baby was about a year and a half.

Who did you go to see?
"My oldest brother."

Which prison was it?
A federal prison in Philadelphia.

Tell me something about the experience? Start with the ride there; how did you get there?
Brother's girlfriend drove her there. Hours-long drive (in Philadelphia)—2-3 hours.

Long walk to find parking. 8-minute walk. She was young; didn't know to ask those questions. Had to get on a long line. A lot of children and women. Many young mothers, young sisters. "Just a lot of young people there." 90% of visitors that day were young. Summer day.

The grandmother got the information from the inmate; her name had to be on the visitors' list. "She made sure I had everything." She told her the visit was 8 hours long and that there would be vending machines. "Grandma gave me \$50 in quarters for the vending machine (the machine only accepted quarters) and for pictures."

Being searched was more physical; the examination was a first for her. The guard lifted her bra and let her breasts "hang". They made her take the underwire out of her bra and throw them away. They made her take the hairpins out of her hair and throw them out. They checked the inside rim of her pants and put her belt in a locker with her shoes. She was told to take off socks and uncuff her pants. She was then subject to an oral cavity search.

Next, the guard extensively searched the child: baby bag (stayed in the locker). They checked the pampers the baby was wearing.

The walk to the holding area was closed in; felt claustrophobic. "I was scared; it felt like the walls were closing in."

They couldn't do but much touching. There was a baby area where the kids could stay, but it was unattended, so she had to get up to check on the child frequently. They could go to an outside area, but there were a "bunch of inmates" there, so they didn't go there.

Later, "It was hard to leave him there, to walk out. It took a toll on me emotionally."

Visits made her feel more connected to him "because those were the only times that I had." He was away for seven years.

So you've gone through this a few times, looking back on that first time or those early days, is there anything you wish you knew then that you now do?

Wiring the search. The search took a toll on her. Wish that she would have been more involved with him (her brother). The guards are trained to be stern, so they were very rough with her and the child. They were always threatened that they would be kicked out.

"I wouldn't wish the whole experience on anybody." It was not a settling feeling, especially with a child. "It's a lot. I wouldn't want anyone to endure that. Being older, you're wiser to the system, so it wasn't as hard for me [later]. I knew what to expect. But for a teenager, it's traumatic. Some may not want to go back. All facilities aren't the same. Rikers was worse." (She immediately goes into her experience visiting Rikers Island Correctional Facility).

Even at 1½, the baby was much calmer on the ride back home. It was like the visit took a toll even on him. Having to leave the loved one, for the child, in her words "begins the process of getting used to it" (them not being around).

As I mentioned before our conversation, I am interviewing you as a part of a doctoral dissertation aimed at helping teenage mothers who deal with the prison system. Again, your answers will be shared confidentially; your name, nor the names of the people you saw during your visit will be shared. You also acknowledge and agree that I am recording this conversation for accuracy. This is for informational purposes only. Do you agree to have your comments used?

Yes.

Please read these notes. By signing below, you agree to participate in this project and that the account is accurate of your statements.



3/11/17

Although I had an idea of the daily struggles of these young women because of the situations that I had witnessed over the years with teens that I had known personally and through ministry, I was surprised by their openness expressing their humiliation, fears, and their hopes. Their young language was harsh and at times difficult to hear. It confirmed how critical their support connections are to their overall success, even to the evolution of their thoughts. They indeed do live a tethered existence. They rely on their connective support to not only help with parenting and sharing resources but also for methods of surviving within their structure. Their connections to their friends and family, though meant to assist them in their daily struggle, sometimes unknowingly more firmly solidified their hold within the paradigm.

The subjects expressed that because of their age they didn't know what to expect with each crisis they faced, so they relied solely on their external connects to keep pace with the rigors of navigating life and the penal process. This subtle revelation suggests that assisting these young mothers might also involve providing services not just to the other young mothers they are connected to, but their support system as well—the grandmothers, the schools, their caseworkers, etc.

It's worth noting that for several reasons, education, though deemed essential, was not a priority for the young women that I interviewed.

Although I satisfied this goal, I know that more interviews are critical to providing better, more comprehensively accurate pictures of life for this group. In Chapter 7 of this dissertation, I will give recommendations on how to possibly increase contact with this unique demographic.

Goal 3: *The Public Awareness Campaign*

My site team and I had a 3-part strategy for executing this goal:

- 1) We'd identify and recruit three expert team members working in some capacity with teen mothers,
- 2) We'd secure at least one public relations or marketing expert to assist with the development of the campaign,
- 3) We'd bring the teams together to discuss and detail the most effective campaign strategy.

Finding the community partners turned out to be relatively effortless. Once I presented the project, I quickly gained partnerships from the College of Staten Island (Dr. Thomas Tellefsen, the Chair of the Marketing Department), the Staten Island Justice Center (Olivia Dana, Esq.), and from my contacts at The Children's Village, including its Executive Director, Tonyma McGhee. Completing the second strategy of this goal proved much harder than expected. I hadn't realized that a more than elementary knowledge of the subject matter was equally as important as understanding how best to present the details of the subject. For that reason, along with my incredibly narrow timeline, the marketing experts I approached were at a lost with how best to proceed and refrained from recommending a specific format. At a teleconference in January 2018 with Dr. Tellefsen, I was given the following recommendation to follow up on:

- gather as many soundbites as possible;
- capture stories, use visuals;
- clearly identify the protagonist and main characters;
- clearly state the challenges;

- suggest what is the transformation: how can the world be a better place if we learn from their story?
- be succinct and clear; paint a picture.
- Be relevant and compelling.
- End with a call to action.

Considering the documentation that we had, along with the information that was uncovered by the research of the topic, I was forced to re-envision the initial project, and have shifted the platform from a proposed video to print medium. My site team and I concluded that it a print campaign showing a teen with her child in some way attached to a symbol of imprisonment would be quite compelling. After searching online for usable images, I found suitable pictures that I was able to put together with statistics from my research. My husband provided some technical PowerPoint assistance, and we were able to develop the following preliminary print ad:



I have detailed the making of this ad more extensively in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, entitled “The Project.”

Although I had intended to launch the campaign in April or May, the site team and I have added a preview of at least three focus groups (expert partners) before the launch will be made official. In addition to the work needed to sharpen the imagery, this will result in a delay of the start of the project for at least four months.

The last part of the project is the creation of a webpage designed to track responses to the ad. Production of the final advertisement and execution of the focus groups will undoubtedly result in a delay of this page. I will address this in greater detail in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS: A PROPOSED ANSWERING

Historical Implications, The Issue of Justice and a Response to the Biblical/Theological

With this project my site team and I chose to wrestle with the following research questions:

Historically, what is the cosmology of this group and how have they traditionally existed in society? What limitations might be encountered with adequately analyzing their needs? Regarding justice, which is a continued societal need, in what ways might the practice of justice be contributing to the further diminishing of this target group? Does answering this question affect the theological principles concerning marginalized peoples and one's understanding of the image of God?

Attempting to define the cosmology of this target group is extremely difficult due to the lack of data for this investigative study, not to mention the myriad avenues through which one might find oneself pregnant, teenaged, and in contact with the law. To attempt this task, we chose to align the more easily accessible statistics in its two major components: teen pregnancy and the plight of children of incarcerated parents. By paralleling this information, we suspected that the study would encourage a point of intersection that would definitively highlight this target group. I am fully aware that this does not necessarily address our absolute target demographic, but it gave a reference point by which to suggest ways in which the group might come to exist and ultimately evolve. Is this the best approach? I do not know, but I do know that we cannot accurately expose the cosmology of this target group without exploring the one factor that is prevalent among pregnant teens and children of incarceration, and that is poverty. The effects of being poor in America transcends every area of community: race,

education, gender, sexual orientation, and even religion. If this target group is genuinely congregation, as I am suggesting, then identification of their cosmology should be seen through the lens of theology that legitimizes the group and offers a remedy for their current condition. For the church, this has been traditionally quite difficult, not so much because of a concern for the poor, but because of the issue of sexuality and women, a topic that caused an evolution in Christianity that was hundreds of years in the making.

By the middle of the third century in Rome, an emphasis on church hierarchy gave way to a movement towards a resurgence of the need for discipline within an ever-growing church membership. A concern for widows and virgins became secondary to bodily denials and other forms of asceticism (fasting, modest clothing, intense prayer). These pious practices became understood as the self-imposed discipline necessary to detach oneself from the materialism of the world and gain holiness, and a more meaningful attachment to God. Dale Irvin, in his work on church history, writes, "Christians were called to present themselves as a living sacrifice, to give up the passing pleasures of the world in exchange for something more enduring and eternal⁷⁹." These "passing pleasures" included the physical pleasures of marital sex, and the image of women started to shift. Devoting one's self to God by separating from the demands of family, including the practice of celibacy was a method of escape used by both men and women. For many women, they chose to be "married" to Christ instead, by their abstinence. This bold act became a source of power in a patriarchal society, as sex in marriage was the right of the husband and the duty of the wife, a norm otherwise hard for women to disrupt during this period. Many women flocked to monasteries, and this new way

⁷⁹Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement, Vol. I: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 142.

of life as the church begrudgingly allowed them to be free from male authority. A famous example was the young Thecla, written about sometime during the second century. Regarding this revolutionary, Irvin writes,

"The words of the apostle [Paul] brought her a great sense of joy, leading her to embrace celibacy and join the Christian movement. Her family brought her before the governor of the city on charges of abandoning marriage, and she was condemned to death. But when they tried to burn her on a pile of wood and straw, a rainstorm put out the fire. Next, she was thrown to wild beasts in an arena, yet according to the story, the animals refused to harm her. Finally, according to the Acts she was released, whereupon she became a teacher of the word at Paul's instruction."⁸⁰

By the seventh century, wealthier women were adding to the number of practicing nuns, and even donated the property to build monasteries⁸¹. Such facilities served both men and women and headed by these affluent women known as abbesses, women such as Hilda of Whitby (614-680), Héloïse of Cluny (1100-1164), Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) and Burgundofara⁸², a 7th-century noblewoman. Eventually, laws were even made to protect the virginity of young women and nuns from rape and seduction⁸³.

In the 9th century, however, things started to change as growing opposition to women in spiritual authority, coupled with changes in church leadership caused a dramatic decline in women joining religious orders. The church of Rome began to shift its focus to other debates, like that of infant baptism and the *homoiousia*, or the same substance-ness between God and the earthly Jesus. By the middle of the 12th century, papal decrees removed mixed

⁸⁰ Ibid. 48.

⁸¹ Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*. Ibid. 347.

⁸² Ibid. 346-347.

⁸³ Ibid.

monasteries of their legitimacy. The 13th century ushered in more constraints for women in the church. The feudal system, wars, and famine left not enough men to marry the many unwed women in Northern Europe. Thousands of *Beguines* or "holy women" lived together in walled communities⁸⁴, as economically and religiously independent groups living without the need of men. They were free to leave their marriages and even their children, and they did not take religious vows. There was some question about their sexuality, with many accused of lesbianism and prostitution⁸⁵. Their unorthodox orthodoxy would eventually threaten the Church enough that they would subsequently be considered heretics and condemned. The root of this was the constant redefining of their sexuality by men.

The Black Plague of the 14th century once again caused a significant shift in gender roles, as women were allowed to own property, have their businesses and divorce mistreating husbands. Although Europe was in the midst of the Renaissance, by the 15th century, the burning of witches at the stake had become commonplace. Many convents, traditionally safe-havens for women, were dismantled, mainly because in it women educated themselves without the guidance of men⁸⁶. By the 17th century, the few liberties afforded to women were all but gone. Even in the church, they were considered second-class citizens, and subject to the commands of their husbands or fathers. The late 16th century saw another change affecting women; the Dutch brought the first African slaves to Jamestown, Virginia, America. The distinction among the classes between women and the church had been tenuous throughout the ages, however, with the advent of slavery, modalities for women take a devastating turn,

⁸⁴ Carol Neel, "The Origins of the Beguines" in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, edited by Judith M. Bennett, et al., (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁸⁵ Carol Neel, "The Origins of the Beguines." Ibid.

⁸⁶ Meagan Ingenito, "Gender in 15th Century England", 2014.

<http://eng431.pbworks.com/w/page/64715886/Gender%20in%2015th%20Century%20England>.

even for the church. The profitability of slavery, mainly driven by Christian theology, created a system of norms that further oppressed women. White women were further made to conform to roles inferior to men that dictated every aspect of their daily lives. However, women of color, Africans in particular, fared far worse. As Peter Heltzel writes, “The defense of slavery became the defense of white male honor, which in turn was dependent on the degradation of black slaves. White male honor entailed protecting the purity of white women, who were confined to the sanctified space of the home.”⁸⁷ Using the Bible as its source (namely the curse of Ham, Noah’s son⁸⁸) racist evangelicals turned away from European Christianity’s interpretation of scripture and constructed a theology that not only supported slavery on an economic level but simultaneously instituted a sexualization of property, black women and black men, who were seen as sexual predators threatening the purity of white women⁸⁹. In this era, whiteness was deemed a symbol of that which was blessed, and blackness was deemed “cursed, ugly, and sinful⁹⁰.” It is these shared threads, the oppression of women in society and throughout the history of the church, along with longstanding classism and racism that leads little doubt as to how today’s darker-skinned teen mother might go unnoticed and mostly unassisted by the structures designed to assist her. Sexuality for women is still under considerable debate, and sex for teens is even considered taboo. But what gender discrimination could not force the church to address, poverty did.

Teen Mothers and Liberation Theology

⁸⁷ Peter Goodwin Heltzel, *Jesus and Justice. Evangelicals, Race & American Politics* (Ann Arbor, MI: Yale University Press, 2009), 22.

⁸⁸ Peter Goodwin Heltzel, *Jesus and Justice. Ibid.* 23.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

With the emergence of the movement of liberation theology in Latin America in the 1950's and 60's, a branch of Christianity took a significant leap from the concerns of episcopal appointments and the piety of privileged women to addressing the cries of the poor. Liberation theology is the discipline that speaks best to the issues of this group because of its intent to alleviate the weight of poverty. I do not see this as a Womanist or a Feminist theological problem, though the goal is the elevation of a girl to a woman fully functioning in society. Liberation theology, on the other hand, speaks to addressing the issue of poverty, which redirects the biblical lens.

Understanding liberation theology from the view of Leonardo and Clodovis Boff⁹¹, liberation theology elevates our target group in three ways:

- 1) Addresses their social issue of marginalization, brought about by the stigma of teenage pregnancy and involvement with prison systems;
- 2) Addresses their concerns of denial of access to the services designed for society to thrive (those rights that were forfeited by their connection with an incarcerated person);
- 3) Addresses their religious concerns where God hears and responds to their inward groanings for help; that God is Abba also to them. They no longer rely solely on their close connection—other teen mothers in similar situations. Instead, they have presented an elevated image of themselves through a different, accepted lens.

As a discipline, Liberation theology doesn't just concern itself with the poor, but also provides the framework for the compassion that moves one to action—these actions are to

⁹¹ Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987).

typify the teachings and practices of the earthly Jesus. This understanding is not only imperative to the teen mother, but also to anyone compelled to offer them help. It's what Boff calls "suffering with"⁹². This project is committed to beginning a dialogue that we hope will eventually end what has been quietly happening to this group historically.

For them, the social issue is a critical one, for as stated by Gustavo Gutierrez, we must see how "these emphases in the past have conditioned and challenged the historical presence of the church"⁹³. The "hermeneutics of liberation"⁹⁴ as Boff informs us, sharpens our biblical read so that the holy word supports the fears, sorrows, and dreams of those that are oppressed, thereby providing hope and a guiding light. This hermeneutic expose the word in such a way that shines the light on the oppressive practices that are the biblical history, but without providing a set solution. The remedy is borne and connected to a time and an agent of change directed by God. Modern movements like "Black Lives Matter" emerge not as a well-thought out, scheduled construct, but as a response to the inner groanings of the marginalized spread abroad. In our society, teen pregnancy is still quite costly. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in a 2016 study reported that children born to teenage mothers are more likely to have worsened educational, behavioral and health outcomes their entire lives, compared to children of older parents⁹⁵. Additionally, the cost of raising a child born to a teen (through public assistance, lost tax revenue because of lack of employment, and the greater expense of public healthcare, foster care, and criminal justice services) cost U.S. taxpayers

⁹² Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation*, Ibid. 2.

⁹³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 32.

⁹⁴ Boff, Ibid. 32.

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health. *Negative Impacts of Teen Childbearing*. November 2016. <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/reproductive-health-and-teen-pregnancy/teen-pregnancy-and-childbearing/teen-childbearing/index.html>.

upwards of \$9 billion a year⁹⁶. In 2013, only 30% of teen mothers achieved their high school diplomas⁹⁷, with less than 2% completing college by the time they are 30 years old⁹⁸. Table 1 below is just a sampling of the many issues teens mothers may face.

Table 1: Cost Categories

This table indicates the categories we have selected from which we have assessed the costs of teenage pregnancy and childbirth, disaggregated to mothers, fathers and children's outcomes on a range of relevant indicators.

Kids Having Kids Findings

Costs and Consequences for Teen Childbearing Mothers

Teenage mothers are less likely to graduate from high school, and the positive effect of completing General Education Development (GED) is small and not offsetting. Impacts on own earnings and the income of a spouse are also both negative and reasonably large.

Costs and Consequences for Fathers

In general, early entry into fatherhood is associated with lower levels of schooling, lower actual occupational income, and fewer hours worked in the labor market.

Outcomes for Children of Teen Mothers from Kindergarten through Adolescence

A young maternal age represents a clear marker for children who experience challenges and disadvantages. Children born to teen mothers are a disadvantaged group; delaying these pregnancies would foster child well-being.

Children's Health and Healthcare

Children of young teen mothers tend to have more chronic health problems than the children of older mothers. In addition, although the children of young teen mothers visit medical providers less frequently and have lower total medical expenses, a larger percentage of the expenses they incur are paid by others in society than is the case among children of older mothers.

Consequences of Teen Childbearing for Child Abuse, Neglect, and Foster Care Placement

Children of adolescent moms are more likely to be physically abused, abandoned, or neglected. Early childbearing and closely linked factors lead to 23,600 children—an estimated 5% of all those born to adolescent mothers each year—ending up in foster care.

⁹⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Negative Impacts*, Ibid.

⁹⁷ National Conference of State Legislatures, "Postcard: Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates." <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-pregnancy-affects-graduation-rates-postcard.aspx#1>.

⁹⁸ National Conference of State Legislatures. Ibid.

Consequences of Teen Childbearing for Incarceration among Adult Children

Children of Teen Mothers as Young Adults

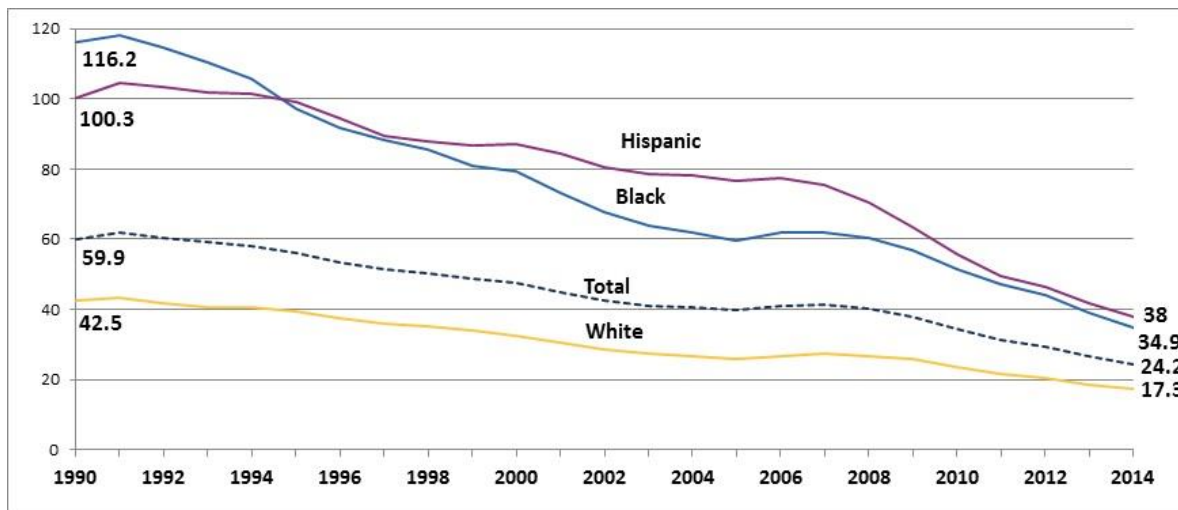
(The effect of adolescent childbearing on foster-care placement results in a taxpayer burden as high as \$900 million a year.)

Studies show a delay of a teen birth would decrease the probability of incarceration by 10.6% and years in jail by 13.4%.

This cost refers to the intergenerational impact of a teen birth on outcomes for young adults. Impacts do not end with the mother or even the child, but can continue for many generations. Especially strong impacts are found for children of young teen parents for both high school completion, and even more so, the probability of having a teen birth.

Although these effects are cause for our collective concern, these understandings take on a more sinister connotation when we remember the demographic reality of the makeup of these statistics. Statistically, these consequences are most felt by those historically oppressed within our society, namely Black and Hispanic under-privileged teens (see Fig. 5).

Figure 5: Birth rates per 1,000 females ages 15-19, by race/ethnicity, 1990-2014



Needless to say, their ability to become successful members of society becomes severely stymied once the teen has a child. The effects on society are real. The same study suggests that **if the number of teenage mothers who dropped out of high school in 2011 had graduated with their class, our nation's economy could benefit by the nearly \$154 billion in additional income they would earn and be taxed on over the course of their lifetime.** But as was alluded to in the subject interviews, having a child at an early age reduces the young mother's exposure to the activities, even those that are age-specific, that encourages their connection to the thriving mainstream. Pushing teen mothers to the margin is the real loss experienced by our society.

Normal teenage activities like after-school programs, summer jobs, and scholarship programs stymie their overall productivity and their ability to achieve under-developed dreams. But illiteracy and loss of taxable revenue aren't the only social issues teenage parenthood stimulates. Teen pregnancy also leads to a shift in social obligations, where the young mother is often forced to halt their educational development to get a job and support themselves and their child. This premature thrust into adulthood produces deepened feelings of resentment and loneliness, a recurring sentiment of the young mothers that I interviewed for this project. They all felt too young to be facing some of the day-to-day decision-making they were forced to make. Often, they wanted just to be kids; a frivolous existence put in jeopardy when the decision was made to keep their child. They expressed that there never seemed to be enough money, even for necessities (although for the three, essentials consisted of brand-name clothing, sneakers, etc.). They are forced to take jobs that suited their age and educational skill set. Consequently, these jobs were lower paying, deepening the descent into

poverty. 80% of teen mothers depend on some form of social, financial assistance⁹⁹. This heightened dependency is a never-ending cycle fueled mostly by an absence of the parental mate. It is no wonder that most teen mothers face constant despair. Reuter's news agency reported in 2014 that El Salvador's 1998 ban on abortion caused hundreds of pregnant teen girls to commit suicide and attempt back-alley, dangerous abortions. During that time, teenage pregnancy was among the leading cause of suicides in that country, with 3 out of 8 deaths of mothers resulting in suicide for girls under the age of 19¹⁰⁰. Sexual violence, which was a substantial reason for these unplanned pregnancies in El Salvador, continues to be a factor for teen girls worldwide, and another cause for stigmatization, silence, and despair. Prison institutionalization exacerbates these societal extremes.

A recent study by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services¹⁰¹ found that indirect psychological damages creep in on prisoners over the course of their confinement (particularly for those serving longer prison sentences), causing them to experience difficulty once they reenter society. This "prisonization" causes the inmate to incorporate the norms they experience while incarcerated into their normal habits of thinking, feeling and acting. Although these behaviors are "normal" adjustments to an abnormal existence in prison, they become dysfunctional in society when these new norms become so deeply ingrained they become normal existence on the outside and prove counter-productive to successful life post-

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Anastasia Moloney, "Rape, Abortion Ban Drives Pregnant Teens to Commit Suicide in El Salvador," for Reuters (November, 2014). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-el-salvador-suicide-teens/rape-abortion-ban-drives-pregnant-teens-to-suicide-in-el-salvador-idUSKCN0IW1YI20141112>.

¹⁰¹ Craig Haney, "The Psychological Impact of Incarceration: Implications for Post-Prison Adjustment," U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), The University of California: Santa Cruz (December, 2001). <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/psychological-impact-incarceration-implications-post-prison-adjustment>.

prison. These behaviors include over-aggression, isolation, and withdrawal¹⁰². Imagine the lasting effects of this mindset on a teen mother dependent upon the inmate as parent and guide, or mate and guide. The person who traditionally serves the role of nurturer and intellectual supporter hobbles their ability to advance, as they themselves struggle with self-value. This coupling is only worsened by the difficulties to resume normal life upon release. Because the U.S. prison population is predominantly comprised of people of color (Black and Latino), these stained existences are heightened by polarizing, racially-divided systems of economic suppression. The struggle becomes seemingly insurmountable without earnest, prolonged intervention. Like the thief on the cross at Calvary, a liberating theology ensures that although crimes were committed and a level of consciousness of penalties exist in society, Jesus provides even them a chance at an elevation above one's sure outcome. All consequences of the decisions one may have been forced to make in life due to circumstances are converted with the words, "Today, you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). That's good news for the young mother depending on an uplifting response to the journey through incarceration.

This brings us to the individual issue or human toll faced by teen mothers navigating confinement and how this existence catches the attention of the liberation theologian. A 2012 study conducted by the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), University of California-Irvine sociologist Kristin Turney found that children of incarcerated parents are three times more likely to suffer from depression and/or exhibit behavioral problems, had higher levels of asthma, speech issues, obesity and general poorer health¹⁰³ compared to

¹⁰² U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Ibid.

¹⁰³ Katie Rose Quandt, *Charts: Kids Are Paying the Price for America's Prison Binge*, in *Mother Jones* (2018). <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2014/08/incarcerated-parents-childrens-mental-physical-health/>.

children of the same environment whose parent was not in jail. It's worth noting that these outcomes, though brought on by many factors, are additionally linked to the lingering effects of poverty, in addition to parental incarceration. Turney writes, "Children with parents behind bars are as likely to suffer certain health problems—including learning disabilities and developmental delay—as children who experience divorce or the death of a parent, witness parental abuse, or share a home with someone with a drug or alcohol abuse problem¹⁰⁴." Even the long-running PBS program "Sesame Street" in 2013 aired an episode in which one of its puppet characters named Alex dealt with the emotional trauma of his father being away in jail¹⁰⁵. The effect of parental incarceration on a child had reached the level of public alarm and attention. A 2014 study published by the American Sociological Association found that beyond behavioral or emotional limitations of children of incarcerated parents, or even standardized testing or psychological modalities commonly used to suggest propensity, teachers of elementary-school-aged children with at least one parent in jail perceive that the child is prone to a lower academic performance¹⁰⁶, and is more inclined to hold that child back a grade than to push the additional resources they require to succeed. This condition is the daily existence of 1.5 million children in our country on any given day¹⁰⁷, with a disproportionate amount being African American children (9 times more likely to be affected than white children). For teens, the possibility of more lasting effects is higher, as teens can

¹⁰⁴ Katie Rose Quandt, *Charts*. Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ PBS, "Sesame Street," *Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration – What is Incarceration?* June 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yk3SxyPW6IA>.

¹⁰⁶ Kristin Turney and Anna R. Haskins, "Falling Behind? Children's Early Grade Retention After Paternal Incarceration," in *Journal of Sociology in Education*, American Sociological Education, Volume: 87, Issue 4, 241-258 (August 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Annie Casey Foundation, *Children of Incarcerated Parents Fact Sheet*. 2008. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-childrenofincarceratedparentsfactsheet.pdf>.

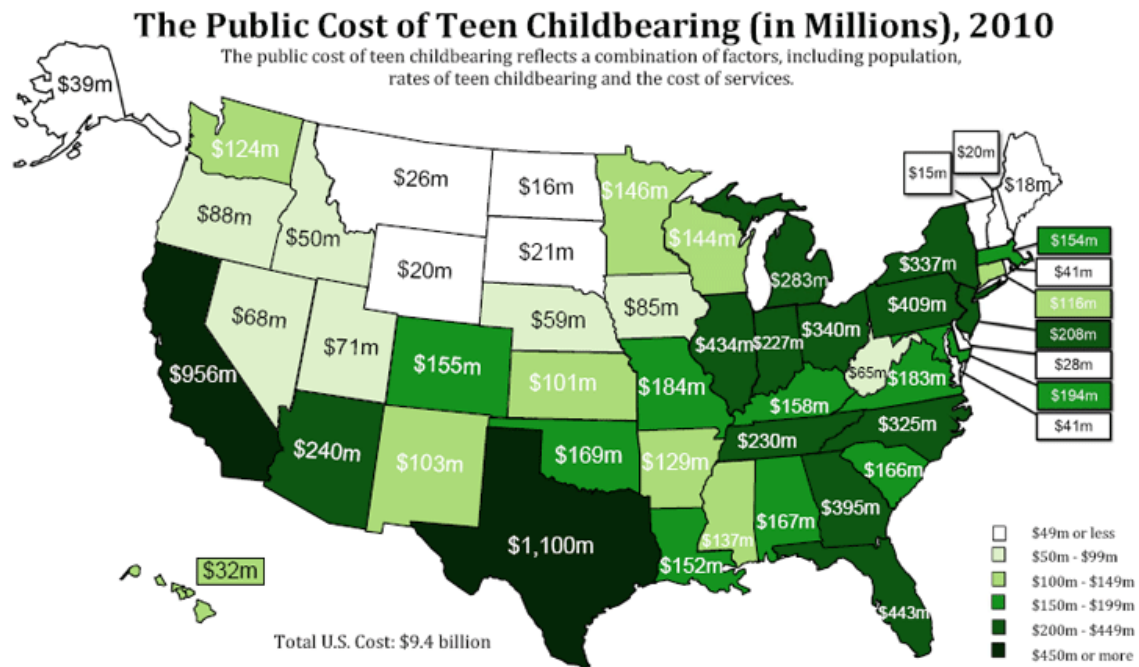
understand the crimes their parents have committed and may even have witnessed the event and their parent's arrest. In addition, teens of incarcerated parents often change homes and schools, are separated from siblings and other family members, causing them to lose financial stability¹⁰⁸ and suffer fragmented connections to their parents. These factors are understandably worsened for the teen caregiver. For that individual no matter the age, liberation is more than just a word. To be liberated, or released from the shackles of one's desperate situation, is a longing often imagined but seldom realized. Liberation is the *shalom* of our existence: it is the security, reconciliation, and fullness of our peace (Boff, page 90). Life for this target group separates the poor soul ensnared in its paradigm from the wholeness that faith accesses. How can one truly experience the love of God holistically when they are cut off from that which is readily available to the community? What good is the talk of sanctification and justification when one is navigating an existence imposed upon them by the deeds of another, in a way that diminishes not just their standing, but their future?

As Boff writes, "Modern humankind is in quest of liberation, of a 'liberated' life, which for the poor has to come through the humble sacraments of bread, a roof over their heads, health, peace."¹⁰⁹ Imprisonment demoralizes inmates and consequently the families they are connected to, to a degree. The financial and emotional struggles imposed upon the families of those incarcerated are real and long-lasting. The cost to society through governmental programs (Figure 6) strains our society over who should shoulder the burden of these costs.

¹⁰⁸ Rebecca Shlafer, "Teenagers with Incarcerated Parents Face Many Challenges," in *Your Teen for Parents*, 2018. <https://yourteenmag.com/family-life/teenagers-with-incarcerated-parents>.

¹⁰⁹ Boff, *Ibid.* 90.

Figure 6.



For the cosmology of this group to change, society must liberate our girls from global abuse, threat, and neglect. Liberation theology provides the framework for this transformation. It imagines the creation of a new creature and stops the potential degenerative process. Providing a way for teen mothers jostling with life and the system of incarceration is a level of doing justice in the community that Gutierrez calls restoring them as "neighbor," which is the evidence of knowing God¹¹⁰. There is much that society gains when the teen mother is given the resources to flourish. Financially, the return on the investment is substantial (see Table 2).

¹¹⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*. Ibid. 110.

Table 2: Comparative Costs for Taxpayers

<i>This table describes costs for taxpayers associated with teenage childbearing at the national, state, and city levels.</i>	United States (as of Dec. 2013)
Health Care Costs associated with a lack of prenatal care, emotional hardships, preterm births, miscarriages, abortions, and dependence on government subsidies	\$2.1 billion
Child Welfare Costs associated with abuse, neglect, foster-care, tax reduction, and dependence on government subsidies	\$3.1 billion
Incarceration Costs associated with housing, feeding, and educating inmates, increased crime rate, decreased social productivity, and lower age of entry into incarceration system (reflecting higher social costs)	\$2 billion
Tax Revenue Costs associated with decreased earning and spending potential, lower tax bracket qualifications	\$9.4 billion
Total Cost to Taxpayers	\$16.6 billion

As mentioned earlier, in 2013 nationally only 30% of teen mothers age 15-19 earned their high school diplomas. Over their lifetime, increased connection to education, job readiness, and adequate childcare will result in a measurable positive effect on society. In Texas, the state which spends the most money on teen pregnancy, the costs are staggering. See Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3: Total Costs of Teen Childbearing in Waco, TX, Annually and 15-Year Projection

The following table describes data collected by the National Campaign, 2013 and qualitative interviews with Dr. Rebecca Maynard.

	Annually	15-Year
Costs and Consequences for Teen Child Bearing Mothers	\$370,376.19	\$4,854,242.48
Costs and Consequences for Fathers	\$284,121.87	\$3,723,771.91
Outcomes for children of teen mothers from kindergarten through adolescence (Welfare)	\$574,470.33	\$7,529,151.05
Children's Health and Health Care	\$1,143,765.25	\$14,990,471.91
Consequences of Teen Childbearing for Incarceration among Adult Children	\$905,696.47	\$11,870,283.19
Children of Teen Mothers as Young Adults	\$117,098.73	\$1,534,725.09
Consequences of Teen Childbearing for Social Services (Child Abuse, Neglect, and Foster Care Placement, etc.)	\$1,630,253.63	\$21,366,509.75
Tax Revenue Loss Associated with Teen Childbearing	\$1,956,304.37	\$25,639,811.69
	Total \$6,982,086.84	\$91,508,967.07

Table 4: Total Costs for Children of Teen Moms in Waco, Tx (Highest City)

<i>This table shows the costs for children of teenage mothers in Waco annually, and with a 15-year projection.</i>	Annually	15-year
Decreased Productivity	\$117,098.73 ¹¹	\$1,534,725.09
Costs to Taxpayers	\$6,210,490.05 ¹²	\$81,396,227.59
Total Costs	\$6,327,588.78	\$82,930,952.68

There's also the matter of exploitation of the poor and the minority. Exploitation and the effects of it are of particular concern for the liberation theologian. If, as Michelle Alexander¹¹¹ suggests, mass incarceration as a commercial vehicle ensnaring poor minorities, then the pregnant teenage mother navigating the systems of imprisonment, along with her children, is the collateral damage of this system. This is also a religious issue. We find an example of this in scripture.

In Mark 10: 13-16, little children were brought to Jesus as they traveled through Perea, the place “beyond the Jordan¹¹².” According to the Mishnah¹¹³, traditionally this area was the place between Judea and Galilee, where the first century Jews could travel during their festivals without stepping foot through Samaria, a place whose people they despised as unholy. Perea, for the Jew, was a place of grace on their way to worship in Jerusalem. But like the modern-day teen mother caught up in systems of detention, bringing their children to *justice* (for that is who Jesus becomes in that moment), they are denied by the arbiters linked to the power, the disciples (who, by the way, just happen to be men). The scriptures do not reveal why in the assigned place for grace was denied, but what we do know is that like those of the mainstream, they at that moment decided who would be in the margin, because they could. In this biblical narrative, Jesus is the justice, and the children are the innocent souls brought for a transformative touch meant to affect their future positively, and the disciples, acting similarly as jail systems exploiting “blessings” hold up the prohibitive hand, “NO!” They cut off access to that which they enjoyed without hindrance and the children, brought

¹¹¹ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012).

¹¹² Mark 10:13. NRSV.

¹¹³ Gustaf Hermann Dalman, *Sacred Sites and Ways. Studies in the Topography of the Gospels* (London: MacMillan Publishing, 1935), 233-239.

in the act of spiritual tethering, are denied their equal right. The disciples made themselves owners of the wealth of Jesus, instead of managers of that wealth. The innocence and the weakness of the children were of no value to them, and so they were ignored. As we should respond when faced with similar disregard today, the outraged Jesus speaks. Jesus reminds the disciples that the kingdom of heaven belongs not to those that manage access, but to those simply brought to it. This is the true display of acting out of the principles of Jesus Christ, as spoken of in Obery Hendrick's book, "The Politics of Jesus"¹¹⁴. In it, Hendrick introduces the religious and political concept of *Malkuth shamayim*, where God belongs to all, in both the present and the eschatological, or future sense. God alone is king to all those that recognize God's sovereignty and that access to God is not restricted by human manipulation, but rather demands resistance to such and all oppression. It is the first-century understanding of the Greek term, *basileia ton ouranon*¹¹⁵ ("kingdom of heaven") and the *basileia tou Theou*¹¹⁶ ("kingdom of God"); that they are not physical places, but the kingship of God above any other authority, and resides through the personhood of Jesus. In this, God will be on the side of the oppressed as the execution of *mishpat* and *sadiqah*¹¹⁷, the Hebrew understanding of justice that demands that exploitation has no right to any relationship between God and humanity. The *mishpat* pertains to the restoration of equitable relationships among everyone in the community, where all are entitled to the equal access to wholeness, wellness, and shelter from oppression¹¹⁸. *Sadiqah*¹¹⁹, though translated as "righteousness" is the work required by

¹¹⁴ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus. Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York, NY: Three Leaves Press: New York, 2006), 19-23.

¹¹⁵ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus*. Ibid. 22.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 43-45.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 43.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 44.

the believer to actively work at this leveling by resolving the conflicts that threaten this idyllic state. As stated by Hendricks, “The basis of biblical justice is fulfillment of our responsibilities to and relationships with others as the ultimate fulfillment of our responsibility to God.¹²⁰” In this understanding, our relationship to God becomes our relationship with each other in community, and what we do to alleviate oppression and the oppressive structures of our society. Jesus reminds the disciples that these children, brought for justice, *to the embodiment of justice*, is, in fact, the kingdom of God. Jesus is reminding us today that the mothers of the children brought to justice, however young, however in need of a blessing themselves, are potential receptacles transporting a new world order. That is why we “suffer” to bring them, as mentioned in Mark’s narrative of Jesus’ response. Indeed, suffer them, or as is the Greek *apheta*, to “permit as a response to grief¹²¹” felt by the Christ, for it should be our only response. It is the “Shalom” that is wished upon all. This understanding makes daily life faced by this target group scandalous. Understandings that:

- Between 2009 and 2010 it is reported that approximately 48% of all mothers between the ages of 15-19 lived below the poverty line¹²²;
- During the same period, 34% of that number lived with either one or both their parents, in poverty;
- In 2014, 90% of teen mothers 15-19 years of age received late or no prenatal care¹²³;

¹²⁰ Ibid. 44.

¹²¹ James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2010).

¹²² National Bureau of Economic Research. “Why is the Teen Birth Rate in the United States So High and Why Does It Matter?” in *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, American Economic Association, vol. 26(2), pages 141-163 (March 2012). <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17965>.

¹²³ Child Trends Databank, *Late or No Prenatal Care. Indicators of Child and Youth Well Being*, Bethesda, MD, (December 2015). <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/late-or-no-prenatal-care/>.

- In 2013, only 30% that do get their diplomas, their children are 50% or half as likely to repeat a grade or eventually drop out of school¹²⁴ altogether.

These are appalling statistics that go against the biblical principles typified by the earthly ministry of Jesus the Christ.

To restate the issue, there are three, seemingly unrelated but contributory societal factors identified as negatively affecting this group:

- 1) that of teen-pregnancy¹²⁵ (as a condition of poverty diminished access to resources designed to allow communities to thrive (SNAP, and the like), racism, lack of education¹²⁶),
- 2) a growing connection between parenting and mass incarceration (In 2000, almost 3.6 million mostly primary caregiving parents were under some type of penal supervision¹²⁷ to an estimated 2.3 million children¹²⁸. 56% of those children were minors¹²⁹; 58% are under the age of 10¹³⁰. Aside from the adverse effects of witnessing a parent being arrested, their report also suggests that children of incarcerated parents have less cognitive skills, and overall emotional and psychological issues including anger, depression, and guilt, with boys tending to exhibit more external symptoms and girls showing more internal behaviors,

¹²⁴ National Conference of State Legislatures. Ibid.

¹²⁵ NYC Department of Human Resources, *Teen Pregnancy Infographic*, http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/news/campaigns/teen_pregnancy/teen_pregnancy_infographic.pdf.

¹²⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures, "Post Card: Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates," <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-pregnancy-affects-graduation-rates-postcard.aspx#1>.

¹²⁷ "Effects of Parental Incarceration," U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (Dec. 1, 2001). <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/effects-parental-incarceration-young-children#The>.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

leaving secondary caregivers with the task of supporting and the troubled child with whatever resources they have.

3) A manifestation outside of prison of what Donald Clemmer called “prisonization¹³¹” in his 1941 book, “The Prison Community”, whereby a fragile support system replaces family and fosters:

- lack of trust of staff (authority)
- a strong need to help others in the same predicament
- a deep sense of loyalty
- a commitment to sharing what you have.

Seen through this lens, images of a young person existing in society in severe crisis emerges. In this narrow view, when we add a robust belief system, damaging or not, we also see congregation, and therefore, a possibility for change.

In a just society, the application of justice must continue so the effects of justice will go on. If our ontological understanding of this marginalized group must evolve for their voice to soar above the mainstream, the issue does hinge on seeing them. From the subject interviews, there was one overwhelming perception expressed, that these girls were sharing the penalties or sentences of their loved one—they were “doing time” with them. For as long as this person was incarcerated, they felt attached to that time, as innocents whose success is tethered to a process. The impressions left upon these young women are worth documenting

¹³¹ Buford Junker, “The Prison Community. Donald Clemmer,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 46, 6: 916-917 (May 1941). <https://doi.org/10.1086/218813>.

and is a key to addressing their concerns. The long bus rides to penal facilities often with toddlers, the invasive body search of their person, their belongings and their children, the often seemingly claustrophobic holding areas they were made to endure, the constant fear in the jail and fear of life without their loved one was repeatedly described as “traumatic.” The effects of the visits were seen in the changed behaviors of the children afterward. How can we feel that for the sake of safety, this normal existence even for them, is acceptable?

Through my work with teens that are on parole or in detention, I had many opportunities to discuss the effects of the penal system on families. Unfortunately, their feelings towards their families are jaded by their activities in the process. Naturally, the process of psychologically measuring justice for those who are in confinement versus those who are not in confinement differs quite dramatically.

Despite the statistics, for this demographic, surviving justice involves developing coping mechanisms whereby they lean solely on one another for support. Herein may lie an opportunity to reimage the use of justice. In 2001, the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services released a report¹³² that found that children of incarcerated parents fair better overall when they are in “kinship relationships¹³³” that provide positive guidance and support for the parent, much like foster care. Such bonds provide stability and a sense of normalcy because of the commonality of experiences. In these relationships, when shared experiences and shared history encourages bond-building support constructs, what emerges looks amazingly like a congregation. Like a fledgling congregation, therefore, the key to the transformation above one’s current state depends upon an ontological shift where there is a reimagining of

¹³² “Effects of Parental Incarceration,” U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

God at some point in the person's fundamental understanding. This may be the key for the teen mother attached to the systems of incarceration; a reimagining of God in the situation, in themselves and therefore a reimagining of God *through* justice. As their recovery will undoubtedly affect their support relationships, the goal is for the cure to provide a rippling effect touching the child eventually. This type of caring for the marginalized is possible and is the heartbeat of liberation theology in the midst of trauma, as propagated by Gustavo Gutierrez¹³⁴, James Cone¹³⁵, Serene Jones¹³⁶ and others. It is the modality to which we as Christian disciples are charged with the scriptural mandate to *set at liberty them that are bruised*¹³⁷.

A Final Thought

In Red Hook, an up-and-coming neighborhood in Brooklyn, there is a facility known as the Red Hook Community Justice Center. It is a building housing a community court system where the judge, prosecutor, and defense lawyer adjudicate misdemeanor cases more closely together to provide sentencing alternatives. The emphasis is on offering an offender services as an alternative to incarceration. What makes this pilot unique is that those alternative programs are housed in the *same building* as the court, and families are *encouraged* to journey with the offender. This program, which was launched 17 years ago efficiently cradles their constituents through a two-year shadowing period. In a recent report issued by an internal auditor for the Center gave the following success data:

¹³⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 15th anniversary ed., 2008).

¹³⁵ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 40th anniversary ed., 2010).

¹³⁶ Serene Jones, *Trauma & Grace: Theology in a Ruptured Word* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

¹³⁷ Luke 4:19.

- adult defendants handled at the Justice Center were 10 percent less likely to commit new crimes than offenders who were processed in a traditional courthouse;
- juvenile defendants were 20 percent less likely to re-offend¹³⁸;
- the Center boasts a 3% recidivism rate.

In this setting, justice is less punitive, more nurturing, and the bond between offender and families are strengthened primarily because the offender is home. Though successful in its mission, this program still does not provide specific help for teens or teen mothers beyond the juvenile offender. This is an excellent model for the transformative vehicle potentially available to teen mothers and their children linked to the penal system. Their predicament ceases to be their destiny. This outcome can be further strengthened when we encourage a strong positive belief system, like those spiritual strategies common to congregations. The idea is that there is a power greater than ourselves—greater even than the penal system—whose operation is not predicated on the condition we find ourselves physically.

Yes, we have a sense of what a prison sentence looks like worn on the face of a young civilian mother, but we must help them to see themselves through the eyes of God. That is liberation theology, and that is congregation. Achieving this will become possible once their plight becomes unveiled, documented, and is a part of our modern psychological and societal study. In this, we have the potential to not only change the cosmology of this group but also provide a suggestion for reimagining how we administer justice through a new image of God.

¹³⁸ Center for Court Innovation, “The Red Hook Community Justice Center: Research Findings (2013), 1. <http://bit.ly/RHeval2013>.

CHAPTER 5

THE PROJECT

It is the overall goal of this project to raise awareness among the member of St. Philips Baptist Church and community partners of the everyday hardships facing teenage mothers navigating the systems of confinement. Ultimately, the end-product will hopefully begin a city-wide conversation around helping this fragile group. This aim was attempted using three vehicles.

- 1) The development of a comprehensive Bible Study curriculum designed to give evidence to the biblical imperative for identifying the marginalized as Christian disciples.
- 2) Conduct subject interviews to relay to listeners the target group's struggles in their voice.
- 3) Create a Public Awareness print campaign that will launch a call to action.

The execution of the Bible Study and interviews, along with assessments of each were detailed in Chapter 3 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT. For this section, I would like to focus on the crux of this project, the creation of the public awareness campaign.

The Public Awareness Campaign

Once I have gathered the available historical, demographic and statistical data, my team and I met with our marketing expert to consider various forms of public awareness campaign mediums. It was our original intention to develop a video campaign, hence the subject interviews. We reached out to Dr. Thomas Tellefsen, the chair of the Marketing Department at the College of Staten Island. Although I had initially asked him to connect me to a graduating marketing student for direction on this project, he immediately offered his

services to assist with developing the right marketing vehicle for this effort (in his estimate there weren't any students available whose knowledge was in line with my request). After reviewing the complexity of the issue, he brought in the contributions of Dr. Mayra Humphreys, the Chair of the Department of Social Work for her guidance. After much dialogue, once again, the lack of source data for this narrow demographic proved to be a hindrance for the experts. They approached the project from the point of comprehensive statistics; in the absence of this information, although interest was high, the project seemed doomed.

My team and I had to rethink what the result would be. I had to take another look at the data we had: data resources found throughout the proposal and dissertation process, exegetical background supporting our study; expert data provided by Dr. Humphreys, Olivia Dana, and others; compelling student interviews, and intimate knowledge of the subject matter based on eye-witness accounts. Considering all this, I decided that a print campaign would work best for our project. My team agreed.

In the absence of an extensive digital database, we chose photos that were impactful and available for public use. We decided on a picture of prison inmates standing with their backs turned, seemingly waiting to exit a large room. Using Microsoft Photo Editor, I superimposed the image of a fresh-faced teenager with a young child, standing together, in the midst of the inmates. We chose to add the following statistics as a caption,

“In 2010 there were roughly 614,000 pregnancies to teens age 15-19¹³⁹. That same year 2.7 million children had a parent in prison¹⁴⁰. Can you help me?”

¹³⁹ Tonya Lewis, “New Rankings Reveal Teen Pregnancy Rates in Each State,” in *Wellness Section* of The Huffington Post, (May 5, 2014). https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/05/teen-pregnancy-rate_n_5269203.html .

¹⁴⁰ “Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet,” Rutgers University National Resources Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, (Camden, NJ: 2010). <https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/files/nrccfi-fact-sheet-2014.pdf>.

I was quite impressed with the result. To me, it captures in an instant what we are trying to relay with this project. To see the full imaging, refer to APPENDIX E.

Evaluation

In Chapter 3, I detailed the outcomes of the first two objectives, to raise awareness of oppressed groups living within society, and to secure subjects for interviews. I achieved the primary goal through the creation and completion of a Bible study. The results were measured using a series of surveys. 100% of the bible study questionnaire respondents said that they were unaware of oppressed groups in scripture before the curriculum and that they are now willing to advocate on their behalf. In this area, the project was hugely successful.

With the subject interviews, as also evaluated in Chapter 3, I had a great deal of difficulty finding the appropriate subjects. Although I was able to record the stories of three members of my target group, because of the timing of the bible study, I was unable to share much of the results with the groups in the way that I had initially planned. Although they had authorized the use of their testimonies and voice recordings, I had intended to use that information for the awareness campaign and did not extend all of the findings to the groups. I realize now that that was a missed opportunity, especially instead of the change in the design of the campaign itself. Since I was able to compile a list of partners (community and experts) who are interested in continuing in the project, I am confident that I will have another opportunity to weave in this critical data more thoroughly later (see Chapter 6 for an overview of these details).

With the proposed initial print campaign, the imagery is powerful, but we're not sure if the language of the piece is just right. Since we are running the campaign "blind," I've

decided to include the added step of previewing this ad to a minimum of 3 focus groups to ensure that the awareness message is conveyed efficiently. The initial group, which will consist of our expert team members acquired during the proposal phase of the project will be the first to view and assess the messaging of the ad. After the initial inquiry, their scheduling was such that this gathering would unfortunately not take place until early May. Unfortunately, this scheduling is outside of the projected timeline for the launching of the advertisement and webpage.

In creating the proposed campaign document itself, we encountered minor software issues, as the imaging of the photos were not exactly crisp. I intend to continue updating the imaging through various software devices (including launching movies from PowerPoint) to ensure that the product will be reproducible through other formats before officially launching the campaign later this year 2018. My marketing expert expressed that he would be available in late March to further assist this portion of the project.

It was a significant goal of the team and me to in time link our print campaign to a webpage that would begin to capture information about those that were intrigued by the ad. With the unexpected issues we encountered, the creation of this vehicle is delayed. However, while completing the initial mock-up of the webpage, I realized that I needed to create an acronym for the project itself, one that would possibly become the name of the not-for-profit organization that would need to be established to complete the work (see Epilogue). At this writing, the team and I had not settled on such a title. For the sake of this dissertation, I have inserted in the ad the acronym “A.R.I.S.E.” (**A**lliance to **R**estore **I**ndividual **S**ecurity and **E**mpowerment). It is not, however, the official name of the project (see APPENDIX B for a

sample of the print advertisement). We plan to use the focus groups to invent the official title of this new endeavor.

Competing this project highlighted very needful next steps. At its inception, I thought that the webpage would be an end-result. However, executing the project uncovered a more significant need that is currently unnoticed. In the "Epilogue" section of this dissertation, I have detailed proposed next steps I intend to pursue to see this remedy to its fruition.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

- Luke 4:18, 19 American Standard Version

An Overview

The members of my site team and I met extensively to assess my ministerial competencies for development during the execution of this project. The members of the site team are Dr. Kathleen (Katie) Cumisky, Mrs. Donna Cutugno, Pastor Brenda Byrd, Mrs. Inga Wilson-Hyde, all of Staten Island, NY, and Dr. Gregory Simpson of New York, NY. Katie and Donna together have more than 20 years of clinical experience working with incarcerated young women and continually kept me grounded as to the realities behind the statistics. Pastor Brenda is a licensed substance abuse counselor with a passion for the youth. Gregory is a Ph.D. level chemist whom I met while we were both working in the Education Ministry of The Riverside Church, New York City. Gregory was pursuing his Master of Divinity degree at Union Theological Seminary. Inga is a 10+ year St. Philips Baptist Church officer and chief administrator. She is also the Church Clerk, our valued historian, and Trustee. These varied backgrounds proved integral in challenging the growth of my competencies during this process. Early on, because of scheduling constraints, Gregory was forced to step back from the project. I continue to include his name because as the only member of the site team who is seminary trained, his initial contributions remained added throughout, and proved invaluable to the overall direction of this section.

In January 2018 I emailed the ministerial competencies evaluation form to the remaining team and asked that they evaluate my progress to the best of their ability. I have also incorporated my assessment of the progress I have made in each ministerial area.

Theologian

“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight.”

- Proverbs 4:7 NRSV

Assessment from the team:

“Rev. McBeth possesses a more than adequate amount of training in biblical and scriptural studies, both formal and informal, and she frequently references and cross-references the works of theologians in her sermons and bible study classes. She has a very clear understanding of the doctrines of the church/synagogue/mosque/community of faith and is able to relate this knowledge to her audience in a way that paints a very clear picture. She has often shared her knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages and is able to break down the meanings of biblical words and phrases so that everyone can easily understand them.

Rev. McBeth was able to competently demonstrate the concept of Malkuth Shamayim when teaching her bible study class from The Politics of Jesus by Obery Hendricks, Jr.”

From my project proposal, I included the following summary regarding this competency: *“My task as a theologian was to engage the scriptures in a way that gave a biblical framework for the obligation of bearing witness to the suffering of this group. By shedding this light, the picture of the cosmology of the group, in its current form, will emerge.”* To educate myself on the many writings and theological thought related to the oppressed in the scriptures, I visited various research facilities to engage in advanced exegetical study and develop my “listening”—the ability to wrestle efficiently with these complex ideas. I then used this information to develop a bible study with the goal of raising awareness of the marginalized in

scripture. To measure the curriculum's effectiveness, I designed and administered a pre- and post-study questionnaire to the groups. Following are some of the findings of the surveys:

- 100% of respondents stated that they had little to no knowledge of the topic prior to the Bible study;
- 100% of respondents said that they had no prior knowledge of the political nature of the human Jesus Christ;
- 100% of respondents said that they gained skills on how to read the Bible differently;
- 100% of respondents said that they gained knowledge of Jesus' response to oppression and the oppressed, as found in the scriptures;
- 100% of respondents said that they have a basic understanding of the term *Malkuth Shamayim* (the importance of relationship versus liturgy as an embodiment of our commitment to our God);
- 100% said that they had no understanding of the term prior to the study;
- 100% of respondents said that they have a greater sense of our collective responsibility to identify the oppressed;
- 100% of respondents said they are more willing to help the oppressed.

Based on these results I can say that I have adequately fulfilled my obligation as a theologian. Growth in this area will never cease. I am thankful for how my site team continued to challenge how I viewed the issues encountered with this project. I had to reimagine the presence of God through a group I had not thought of as divine before this project. My knowledge of the study of nature of the divine as an academic discipline exploded as I worked to develop theories I had not found in previous studies. I am grateful and amazed that this study might actually be determined as original source data on the topic. I became acquainted with many new resources during this study and looked forward to continuing this competency development in partnership with the community.

Prophetic Agent

“And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets.”

- 1 Corinthians 14:32 NRSV

Assessment from the team:

“Rev. McBeth has a profound sensitivity and empathy towards victims of social injustice. She also possesses an uncanny ability to communicate to others her passion for justice to inspire change.”

In my proposal, I stated that in order to further enhance this competency, I had to *“Position myself to speak this group’s truths, I’ve got to have a thorough knowledge of many factors; not just our scriptural imperatives that suggest the conferred authority to do so, but I’ve also got to have a keen awareness of the real effects of poverty and ageism on the structures connected to incarceration.”* To achieve this, I proposed to “work with the site team and expert community partners to compile and analyze existing data pertaining to teen pregnancy and confinement in such a way as to allow the conclusion to either confirm or contradict my hypothesis that there is indeed a correlation between these two systems, which further feeds generational oppression.”

As I've repeatedly stated from the outset, the data, though rich in identifying the perils of very young mothers and those in confinement, failed to speak to the problems of my target group. Although I had to identify an image not there, it was Howard Thurman that grounded me, by reminding me that, “There is one overmastering problem that the socially and politically disinherited always face: under what terms is survival possible?¹⁴¹” Embracing this

¹⁴¹Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1996), 20.

made stepping into their shoes, seeing from their perspective and formulating the picture for the mainstream easier. Understanding the subject in this way made my approach to being their prophet agent possible. I dug deeper into acquiring more data from both perspectives to more fully understand the avenues these teens chose to take just to survive. As I intently listened to their stories of the shame of prison visits and the struggle to stay in school, I understood why they sometimes chose to give up. I also came to know how those with robust and spiritual support systems became determined to rise despite their circumstances. I poured this understanding into the print campaign that I developed with my site team. A future analysis will determine whether I hit the mark as a prophet agent.

James Baldwin once said, “Leaving aside all the physical facts which one can quote, leaving aside rape or murder, leaving aside the bloody catalog of oppression, which we are in one way too familiar with already, what this does to the subjugated—is to destroy his sense of reality.” I hope to make the reality for this target group and us all a less scary place.

Religious Educator

*“Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.*

- Psalm 86:11 NRSV

Assessment from the team:

“Rev. McBeth led her bible study class on an in-depth journey of how to identify and respond to things such as being a voice for the voiceless.”

To develop my ability as a Religious Educator, it was my goal to create a vehicle that would not only provide information regarding my target group but do it in such a way as to inspire commitment to help change overall outcomes. I was proud of the survey results highlighted in the “Theologian” section. It showed that the participants felt that they had encountered not only new principles in the scriptures but also new resources they had not used before. During the 9-month Bible study, I introduced the class to Greek and Hebrew lexicons, exhaustive studies, translational discrepancies, various theological perspectives and their authors, and the like. The conversations were quite lively! The classes were engaging and fun, and I learned as much as I taught. I am most proud that the groups communicated in conversations and writings (questionnaires) a willingness to integrate these new tools into the life of our community. At some point, I wish I had considered bringing the groups together—the subjects with the researchers. I have learned through this process that our sensitivities are tested when we come face-to-face with the grittiness of the “Other.” I will keep this as a possibility for future studies.

My interactions with our expert partners also challenged my ability as a religious educator. Although they were experts in their respective roles, I had the privilege of sharing their connection to the target group, which they had not encountered before our partnership. I am pleased to report that they all have committed to continuing to assist me throughout the further development of this project and future outreach structure. Though still in evolution, I believe I have increased my competency as a religious educator.

CHAPTER 7

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While my nephew was incarcerated, his son's teenaged mother posted a photo on Facebook of their fresh-faced 2-year-old flashing a big, crooked smile and a Bloods gang sign. My heart ached for the future of both the mother and the child and the potentially millions of other children exposed to prisonization. I searched my mind for the advocacy group or agency I could refer them to that would reach them in a transformative way to journey them into the life outcome in which we as a society would all hope. This urging became not just a project for me, but a ministry. Although I suspected that analyzing the needs of teens navigating incarceration systems would be involved, I will admit that there was much about delivering this project that caught me by surprise.

Lack of Evidence

To start, I cannot express enough my frustrations with finding statistical data for non-incarcerated teen mothers with confined significant others. Although I reached out to several legal, communal and governmental agencies, I did not uncover any that were doing specific casework targeting this group. The same was the case for my expert partners. With every expert and representative that I spoke with throughout this 4-year process, no one could offer any concrete data for this narrow demographic. However, the evidence IS there, hiding in plain sight. All that's needed is a prophet to connect the pieces of research with our witness in such a way as to speak truth to powers. For example, I discovered a 1993 report issued by the U.S. National Library of Medicine that concluded that statistically, **85% of all fathers of**

babies born to girls between the ages of 11 and 18 years were actually adults; that adult men impregnated more than 50% of mothers aged 11-15 years old; that the average age of fathers to the babies of junior high school mothers was 15-26 years of age¹⁴². In the report are the chilling words, “There is a greater likelihood that a man older than 23 years will impregnate a junior high girl than will a junior high boy.” The authors of this document stated that this age gap between partners was most prevalent among the very young girls and that this trend, though studied in California, mirrored the national average. That was back in 1993. When I checked these statistics with 2 of my site team members who serve with me on the Advisory Board of Children’s Village, who both have a 20-year history working with incarcerated teen girls, some of which were mothers, they confirmed that these percentages, some 20 years later today are not only still correct, but somewhat conservative. When we place into our understanding that already in the U.S. in 2018, 19.2% of currently incarcerated males are between the ages of 15-26¹⁴³ we see the potential for a significant number of teen mothers having to navigate these systems of detention. This project is just the tip of the iceberg. These numbers are an indication of much more than school-yard crushes taking adult turns.

Let me take a moment to address the identification of the group as a congregation. For obvious reasons, although I have labeled this group as such, I am limited in doing a traditional congregational analysis of them. For one, they are not a fixed, stable organization, but instead young people living separately until the need arises for them to share their

¹⁴² M. Males, “School-age Pregnancy: Why Hasn’t Prevention Worked?”, US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, In The Journal of School Health, Occidental College, 63(10):429-32 (December 1993).

¹⁴³ *Statistics: Inmate Age*, Federal Bureau of Prisons (2018).
https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_age.jsp.

resources. In my familial relationships along with my work in ministry, I was able to witness first-hand how these young mothers freely gave to each other what they had (money, information to programs, babysitting duties, etc.) to help each other meet their daily obligations. However, because this demographic is not currently under study, I could not provide the research data that would qualitatively support this finding. I did notice, however, that their belief systems can be varied, but reconnect along different tenuous points of intersection as their struggle dictates. They are just as subjected to the stigmatization and adverse effect of poverty, teen pregnancy, and parental incarceration as any other teen (detailed throughout this dissertation). These adverse effects cause them to form lasting bonds that not only shape their understanding but at times chain them to ideologies and behaviors attached to their viability—good or bad. Investigating traditional congregation can lend itself to this body of work. Assessing the overall health of the “congregation” might help identify whether their status in society is being threatened. Such contributory attributes would include an in-depth examination of family, community, their "houses of worship," and identification of their "leader"¹⁴⁴, traditional and tacit role expectations¹⁴⁵, as well as internal and external tensions¹⁴⁶. Healing their aches can only be done with the creation of productive avenues for reaching these unique teens.

I hypothesize that once we gather all this complex, yet targeted data and compare it with the research information that has already been proven, we will have unveiled the image

¹⁴⁴ Nancy T. Ammerman, Carroll W. Jackson, Carl S. Dudley and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations. A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 111.

¹⁴⁵ Nancy T. Ammerman, et al., *Studying Congregations*, Ibid. 112.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 120.

of a closed sub-community that is suffering and therefore self-perpetuating right before our eyes.

What They Face

Social scientists and researchers have long since begun to disentangle the effects of parental incarceration on children (including the effects of other factors that may have existed long before incarceration, such as domestic violence, child neglect due to the parental abuse of alcohol or drugs, mental illness or other risk factors). Many of these negative consequences cause not only an upheaval of their living arrangements and threaten their financial stability¹⁴⁷, but studies prove that the “toxic stress” of these encounters have a detrimental effect on a child’s physical and emotional development (see CHAPTER 2 ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE). Based on these findings, we now know that a child’s exposure to prison/detention connections potentially hinders their ability to thrive emotionally, physically, and developmentally. The introduction of sexuality into this study increases these disparaging statistics, as with that inclusion comes the issue of poverty and race (as with the other topics). Despite sexual education and the availability of contraception in most high schools and through many governmental and non-profit agencies, adolescent pregnancies still occur.

In CHAPTER 2 of this dissertation, I provided information regarding the effects of trauma, or “toxic stress” on the development of children and its potential for health problems in adults. At some point, an in-depth study of the trauma felt by prison involvement upon these young mothers must be conducted. Although there are currently efforts underway to

¹⁴⁷ “Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet,” Rutgers University National Resources Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated. <https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/files/nrccfi-fact-sheet-2014.pdf>.

reduce the prison population and close penal facilities such as New York's famed Riker's Island, which according to a recent New York Times article is proposed to take years to actualize¹⁴⁸, there are long-term outcomes that will continue beyond the shut-down of these facilities. I fear that the children exposed to involvement with these systems will in time display the long-term, disastrous issues faced by the first-responders of the 911 Attacks. 16 years later, we now know that those environmental exposures caused hundreds to die slow and agonizing deaths. Riker's Island alone has been in existence since 1932¹⁴⁹—86 years of legendary stories of in-house brutality, murder and dysfunction that was the place to which families visited, and out of which inmates emerged changed and often prisonized. (In a twist of irony, until 1932 Riker's Island served as a dump for the city's rat-infested garbage and remnants of coal-burning stoves used by homes at the time. When the facility was converted to correctional use, all of that trash was transported to Freshkill, Staten Island¹⁵⁰.) I am reminded of the Kalief Browder story¹⁵¹, a young man who at the age of 16, spent three years in Rikers without ever being convicted of a crime, and endured documented atrocities while there including two years of solitary confinement. He was ultimately released and once his story became public was courted by politicians like Rand Paul and celebrities like Jay Z and Rosie O'Donnell, and later hung himself from the window of his mother's home using strips of bedsheets he had made. These and similar post-traumatic realities are often felt and

¹⁴⁸ Michael Schwirtz and Michael Winerip, "Close Riker's Island? It Will Take Years, Billions and Political Capital", The New York Times (March, 2016). <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/03/nyregion/closing-rikers-island-despite-rhetoric-intractable-obstacles-remain.html>.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Schwirtz and Michael Winerip, "Close Riker's Island?" Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Jennifer Gonnerman, "The Kalief Browder Story," The New Yorker (June, 2015). <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/kalief-browder-1993-2015>.

transferred upon their connecting families. Alternative realities have to be created for these children to survive it all.

Next Steps: Beyond the Project

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

- John 17:22-23 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Admittedly, I had not anticipated the sheer scope of this issue. I am planning to appeal non-profit institutions like The Annie Casey Foundation for a fellowship to be able to acquire the staff to continue this extensive and needful research. Based on the work that I have already completed to execute this project, I do have a plan for how to proceed beyond this dissertation.

Creation of a national database. I see the need to develop a database that tracks information for teen mothers that are affected by incarceration and detention. Currently, I have not found any such distinct monitoring system through the agencies that provide service or monitor trends for teen mothers. With the formulation of the database, I would like to partner with these agencies to make gathering this data commonplace. One of the most substantial obstacles I faced in this process was gaining access to these young women. There are non-profit organizations like “The Door¹⁵²” that provides outreach to troubled teen mothers, and “Covenant House¹⁵³” that provides help to homeless teen mothers, but not even

¹⁵² The Door. 2018. <https://www.door.org/>.

¹⁵³ Covenant House. 2018. <https://www.covenanthouse.org/>.

they have specific data on which of their clients have jail involvement beyond themselves. We know that there are young mothers connected to incarceration through their parents and some that are themselves facing confinement, but there are others that are beyond these criteria, and those are the ones no one is tracking. If a universal database existed, one that would be used across the agencies, then we could better develop the modalities to include the various forms of detention accurately and thereby offer systemic solutions for more healthier outcomes. The young ladies that I interviewed I had already come in contact with because of my civic work in ministry, and through the personal family connection.

The Webpage

To better connect those interested in this research study, I plan to create a webpage to gather data, and ultimately a webpage to display findings and to link this work to the not-for-profit vehicle that is to come. Also, the website would be a user-friendly place designed to provide resources for young mothers that are beyond the reach of the connective agencies. A national database would explode this possibility.

The Development of a Tool-Kit

Upon full execution of the database, the next step would include the development of an independent, not-for-profit organization that would work in partnership with the connective resources to gather and analyze the data, to ensure the legitimacy of this information. Ultimately, this group would construct a document that effectively outlines the issues, risk factors and potential outcomes threatening are teen mothers. The members of this new NFP may or may not be experts in the identified areas of concern, so additional

partnerships will need to be made. There are so many societal factors that contribute to the how and the why of teenage parents involved with prisons. From being poor to racism, sexism, ageism, crime and more, how they get there is incredibly complex. To provide the right solutions, we as a society must soberly address as many of these issues as possible, and form as many collaborative connections as are available. The assignment is daunting, but not impossible. We hope that out of these collaborations, new avenues to resources will be forged.

EPILOGUE

A PLACE TO GO

In Chapter 5, I mentioned the work of the Red Hook Community Justice Center. To restate, this is a place where not only are low-level offenses adjudicated using non-traditional, less punitive strategies, but the structure is designed to deepen family bonds with the offender. There's a Housing Court there, where staff assists with housing complaints in an attempt to settle disputes before additional legal services are needed. The success rate of such a facility attests to its ability to transform justice. The program works, in part, because empowering the offender is court mandated. Entry into rehabilitation treatments is court mandated. Mediation sessions with conflicted family members are court mandated, so to avoid incarceration, offenders and their family members readily comply. Such opportunities need to be made readily available to non-offender teen mothers that might find themselves in need of direction with not only navigating the legal system but daily life situations that may not be positively addressed because their primary support is in jail. While supporting their loved one through the adjudication process, in this setting, they will be able to get the additional assistance they may need *on site*. For the young mothers that gave an interview for this project, this would have made a substantial difference in their ability to transform through the process, and subsequent prison sentences.

I have already begun to make the inquiry to our local District Attorney to discuss providing such services for this demographic in the replicated facility being planned for Staten Island. However, without supporting statistics regarding this demographic, the conversation is stymied. A comprehensive database and subsequent tool-kit would undoubtedly open doors

to the agencies poised and prepared to provide this kind of help. Such data compilation will legitimize any efforts for the various agencies doing work on behalf of teen mothers until our future not-for-profit organization is created.

I would like to see it done. Much of the resources are already in place. All that's needed now is to shed light on the ones who might not be receiving them. This project sheds that light.

APPENDICES

EMPOWERING CONGREGATION THROUGH THE UNVEILING OF THE INNER-CITY TEEN MOTHER ENTWINED IN THE SYSTEMS OF INCARCERATION

BY

AGNES MCBETH

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary, New York

July 20, 2017

Challenge Statement

As the Assistant Pastor for the past 10 years at the St. Philips Baptist Church, located in the inner-city neighborhood of Port Richmond, Staten Island, NY, I am aware of the seemingly tethered effect systemic involvement with the various forms of confinement can place upon families, particularly teen mothers age 15-19 and their children. In this demonstration project, I will create a public awareness campaign that will expose the generational, crippling outcomes distinct to this veiled community.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

St. Philips Baptist Church (herein referred to as SPBC) consists of an African-American congregation located in the Port Richmond section of Staten Island, New York. At 147 years old, it is the oldest Baptist church on the Island, organized only a mere 7 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, mostly by Blacks who immigrated from the south (according to church history). By the late 1960's, opportunities for African-Americans on the Island were opening up, and many SPBC members entered fields normally denied to them. In 1966 the congregation moved from a house on Faber Street in Port Richmond, into its own Scotland-inspired, stained glass edifice they purchased from a German Reformed Church; it is where the church stands today. By 1968, members of the congregation satisfied an \$80,000 mortgage note acquired only two years previously¹⁵⁴, quite a financial accomplishment at that time, and evidence of communal dedication and prosperity. In addition to its financial growth, the church acquired a rich history of civil activism history. It's former pastor and several members marched on Washington, D.C. with Dr. Martin Luther King in 1963. More joined the movement in 1965 after being outraged by what they witnessed along with the nation on "Bloody Sunday" at the Edmond Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama.

Over the decades, as Staten Island's economic infrastructure started to diminish, so too was the case in Port Richmond. The members of SPBC were hit hard. Large institutions that previously employed thousands began to close, leaving little to no replacing employment opportunities. The borough's historic Seaview Hospital, dedicated in 1913 as the single

¹⁵⁴ St. Philips Baptist Church History.

largest (2,000 bed) and most expensive treatment facility for tuberculosis in the United States closed in 1973¹⁵⁵. Many SPBC members lost their livelihood and their family's primary source of income. Nepotism and cronyism in part caused scarce jobs on the Island to go to Whites. By 2010, Port Richmond had become the 3rd poorest neighborhood on Staten Island, based on median income¹⁵⁶. Despite our country's recent rise in the economy post-Obama era bailout and recession recovery, the community scarcely rebounded.

Studies have shown that economic poverty ravages communities in many ways. It's been proven that two societal factors fed by poverty are an increase in crime and a rise in teen pregnancy, and the mean statistics by neighborhood can indeed differ from the overall city and national trends. These pockets do exist. Although birth rates for children born to mothers age 15-19 have fallen 9% nationally in the years 2013-2014¹⁵⁷, a recent NYC Human Administration Resources study¹⁵⁸ found that teenagers who live in the higher poverty neighborhoods of New York are 2.6 times more likely to become pregnant as compared to those who live in lower poverty areas. The study suggest several contributory reasons for this outcome, as poverty cuts off access to many resources designed for society to thrive. It also suggests that this statistic becomes dire in areas of high crime.

The Center for Community Change in 2016 published an article reviving the conversation surrounding the link between poverty and incarceration. In it, it states that "two-thirds detained in jails report annual incomes under \$12,000 prior to arrest"¹⁵⁹. That's two-

¹⁵⁵ Abandoned NYC, Abandoned Places and History From the Five Borough and Beyond, *The Seaview Children's Hospital*, by Will Ellis, May, 2015. <https://abandonednyc.com/2015/05/20/the-sea-view-childrens-hospital>.

¹⁵⁶ City-Data.com, <http://www.city-data.com/nbmaps/neighborhoods-staten-island-new-york.html#n35>

¹⁵⁷ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Reproductive Health, Data and Statistics," https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/data_stats/index.htm

¹⁵⁸ NYC Human Resources Administration Teen Pregnancy Infographic, http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/news/campaigns/teen_pregnancy/teen_pregnancy_infographic.pdf

¹⁵⁹ Center for Community Change, *The Relationship Between Poverty and Mass Incarceration*,

thirds of the nearly 60% of all peoples arrested, or stopped and frisked in the 5 boroughs of New York in 2016, which totaled 179,356, not including rape and murder numbers, or criminal summonses.¹⁶⁰ That's a staggering statistic. Although NYC's overall crime rate fell to 12% in 2015¹⁶¹, the rate of crime in communities like Port Richmond has remained consistent with the rise in poverty over the years.

As also reported by the Center's article, the effects of poverty are especially true among people of color; black and Latino, whose population, particularly for the latter, has been exploding over the years in Port Richmond. In 1970, the year when detailed reporting for those of the various Hispanic heritage was first taken¹⁶², the population of Port Richmond was 5% Black, with no recorded Hispanic residents. However, by 2010, Port Richmond's population was recorded at 38% Hispanic, and 17% Black¹⁶³. This tremendous demographic shift of the past 50 years consisted largely of Mexican immigrants, including those from countries like El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Liberia. In fact, Staten Island currently has the largest concentration per area of Liberian peoples outside of their country. We see a convergence of two factors in the community: a dwindling economy and a flood of people

https://www.masslegalservices.org/system/files/library/The_Relationship_between_Poverty_and_Mass_Incarceration.pdf

¹⁶⁰ New York City Police Department, *Crime and Enforcement Activity in New York City*, http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/analysis_and_planning/year-end-2016-enforcement-report.pdf

¹⁶¹ New York Magazine, *New York City Had a Record-Low Crime Rate in 2016, But That's Not The Story in Other Cities*,

<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/01/new-york-city-had-record-low-crime-rate-in-2016.html>

¹⁶² Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970-1990, For Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States," US Census Bureau Population Division Working Paper No. 76, (2005): 83, <https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.pdf>

¹⁶³ New York City Census FactFinder, www.city-data.com/nbmaps/neigh-staten-island-new-york.html#n35 [for income, pop, rent stats above]

needing a vibrant economy, straining an already pauperized infrastructure and stroking common statistical consequences. When resources are scarce, those most threatened are the most vulnerable among us—children of the poor, undereducated, incarcerated and detained.

Being an Assistant Pastor, I have had the privilege of working with several community partners over the years to help alleviate some of the ills of our community. For the past almost 3 years I have been serving as the Chair to the Advisory Board of a facility named, “Children’s Village,” a low-security, residential program for incarcerated teen girls who are also wards of the state through ACS and are facing parole. I’ve been a part of the facility since its opening. In this short time, they have received an increasing number of pregnant teens who are in the system and facing release. Two years ago, there were none. Last year there was only one; currently there are 3. They are now in the process of expanding their facilities to accommodate at least 17 more teen mothers. This is alarming when one considers that Staten Island is the smallest of the five New York City boroughs, representing a microcosm of a larger issue happening in the outer boroughs.

Staten Island, as a project location, is a particularly ripe place for this type of study for a couple of reasons. It is often called the “Forgotten borough” because the lion’s share of state and federal resources are distributed by proportion, rendering allocation primarily given to the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens, then to the Island accordingly. But what those of us engaged in community servicing have found is that when there are budget reductions, resources for Staten Island are cut in order to be diverted to the other, larger boroughs, while simultaneously, cases from public service agencies are being dumped into the borough to alleviate pressures of over-burdened departments. Staten Island becomes the

“dumping ground,” while receiving fewer resources to support its caseloads. Those who are struggling on the Island are put in an even worse position.

There is another, more disturbing reason that Staten Island, particularly Port Richmond is an ideal site for this project. I mentioned earlier that according to US census data, the borough has become increasingly a home to immigrants, including an ever-growing Latino immigrant community. With our current government’s increasing fervor heightening sudden detaining and imprisonment of peoples of color nation-wide, particularly Latinos, for Staten Island, this has led to widespread fear of detention, imprisonment, and deportation. People needing resources aren’t coming forward, for fear of shedding a negative spotlight on family members whose documentation aren’t exactly in order. Families are being left more vulnerable to the negative effects of these systems.

SPBC continues to be at the forefront in our community to partner with other organizations to be an advocate for change and a safe-haven for those under threat. This is naturally where we will launch this public awareness campaign.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

The Challenge Statement:

As the Assistant Pastor for the past 10 years at the St. Philips Baptist Church, located in the inner-city neighborhood of Port Richmond, Staten Island, NY, I am aware of the seemingly tethered effect systemic involvement with the various forms of confinement can place upon families, particularly teen mothers age 15-19 and their children. In this demonstration project, I will create a public awareness campaign that will expose the generational, crippling outcomes distinct to this veiled community.

From Merriam-Webster's online dictionary:

teth·er ['teT̩ər]

NOUN/VERB

3. a rope or chain with which an animal is tied to restrict its movement.
synonyms: rope · chain · cord · leash · lead · restraint · fetter · halter
4. the limit of one's strength or resources.

In the “Introduction to the Setting” section of this proposal, I briefly provided statistics linking poverty to crime. There was no need to give much detail there, as these findings, though recent, are not new. I also briefly mentioned my work with “Children’s Village”, but that group is not the primary focus of this project. There is an often under-reported plight nestled within these crime and poverty numbers, and that is daily life for teen mothers juggling jails and motherhood.

At the outset, it's worth noting that since 1990, nationally, pregnancy rates have decreased by 30% since 1990 for teens between the ages of 16 and 19¹⁶⁴. Before we celebrate, it's worth noting that the birthrate for teens in the U.S. is still higher than that of any other developed country¹⁶⁵. In 2013 alone, there were 26.5 live births for every 1,000 young women between the ages of 15-19—that's 273,105 American babies¹⁶⁶ born to girls still in high school, and these are not all first births. Comparatively, teens who live in the poorest neighborhoods are 2.6 times more likely to become pregnant¹⁶⁷, with 16% being African American, and 17% being Hispanic, twice as many as their White counterparts¹⁶⁸. If you are a teenager in the U.S., and you are of color, and you happen to be poor, statistically, you are prone to become pregnant before your 20th birthday, so elevation beyond you and your family's condition becomes that much harder. A 2013 report presented by the National Conference of State Legislatures stated that in the U.S., only 30% of teen mothers achieve their high school diplomas¹⁶⁹. The same study found that less than 2% of them complete college by the time they're 30 years old and that their children are 50% likely to repeat a grade and eventually drop out. Recent studies suggest that the reason for this goes beyond the difficulties of balancing child rearing and education¹⁷⁰, but that teen mothers have the added pressures of remaining engaged in the areas that bring about their success. But there's more.

¹⁶⁴ New York City Human Resources Administration, **"Health Department Data Shows Steady Decline In Teen Pregnancy Rate," May, 2013.**

¹⁶⁵ New York City Human Resources Administration, Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Trends in Teen Pregnancy and Childbearing," Office of Adolescent Health, Rockville, MD, 2015.

¹⁶⁷ New York City Human Resources Administration, Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ National Conference of State Legislatures, "Post Card: Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates," <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-pregnancy-affects-graduation-rates-postcard.aspx#1>.

¹⁷⁰ Marshall, Olivia, *"The Dropout Crisis and Teen Pregnancy,"* <http://www.progressivepolicy.org/blog/the-drop-out-crisis-and-teen-pregnancy/>.

In the U.S., our poorest communities are still being ravaged by a justice system designed to prosper from mass incarceration. African Americans, including youth offenders, are five times more likely to be confined as their White counterparts found guilty of almost the same exact crimes¹⁷¹. Hispanic youth are three times as likely to be incarcerated for the same crimes as Whites¹⁷². Paralleling these two seemingly unrelated findings, not only are poor teens of color more susceptible to the contributory factors that lead to pregnancy, but they are five times more likely to be made to deal with the systems of confinement (stop-and-frisk, detention, imprisonment) either of themselves, or through their family, their mates, or their friends and poverty is the undergirding of much of this fate. There are babies being born to teenage mothers with adolescent understandings, who are enwrapped in the tentacles of society that has separatism and penalty as its foundation. And we wonder why the cycle continues. I don't wonder; I see a preventable process.

In 2009, my sister's oldest son was sentenced to seven years in a federal prison for his participation in an interstate armed robbery of a jewelry store. At the time, his son was only 3 years old and his son's mother was 18. Over the period of his incarceration, I witnessed the mother, along with her friends in similar conditions, struggle with single parenting, long bus rides and an invasion of dignity common to prison visits. I saw the battles between feeding the child versus replenishing commissary allotments, and a progressive hopelessness over relief out of that daily grind—all with the nagging uncertainty that the relationship, in its original state, would resume upon their loved one's release. But what I also witnessed over the years was how young mothers like her, in similar circumstances but with differing

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

relational ties, forged a close-knit group that supported each other in their deepest obstacles. They were each other's babysitters, sources of outside income and information, and so much more. They lifted each other because they were in the trenches together, fighting their war side by side, sometimes winning and sometimes losing. Their mates didn't always come home to them and the system wasn't always kind. So where does this cycle leave them? Where does it leave the children born in this setting? Common interest with shared resources by any other name is a *congregation*.

NCSL's report referenced above was published in 2013, a mere 4 years ago. The problem continues and is frighteningly relevant when we consider our current president's systematic policy of detention, confinement, and deportation of illegal immigrants. When faced with these obstacles, negotiating life from this setting, which is the least flexible and therefore most threatening, has the potential for a more pervasive shackling away from the programs designed to combat poverty.

Growing up in Brownsville, Brooklyn (a neighborhood much like Port Richmond economically), and pastoring for the past 10 years in the poorest section of Staten Island, I've seen these girls in their struggle. I know these girls. They are loyal to their plight.

Hopefully, in the process of this project, what will emerge will be a redefinition of the presence of God within some of the most ravaged of our communities. Using primarily human subject research, I intend to parallel how a lack of access to basic resources for teen mothers encourages a spiraling effect when she is operating within our country's systems of confinement. In the absence of overwhelming quantitative analysis data regarding this particular demographic, I intend to make visible this group, displaying their veiled struggle in our society. In time, I'd like to initiate a state-wide and ultimately national platform to deal

with the historical implications that caused this group to be marginalized and dramatically underserved. Much like the Untouchables of India, this is a group that hides in plain sight, living on the fringes of our society. I intend this not to be a conversation about welfare, but rather encourage a major shift in public policy regarding incarceration and babies.

Using primarily using human subject research, I intend to parallel how a lack of basic resources for teen mothers explodes when she is operating within our country's systems of confinement.

CHAPTER 3

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: The primary goal of this project is to raise the level of consciousness regarding the plight of teen mothers intertwined within systems of incarceration, and particularly how they might be hindered from equal access to resources—marginalized. By accomplishing this goal, I will begin by showing the community of St. Philips Baptist Church and our community partners the biblical impetus for our collective involvement in this matter.

Strategy 1: Develop a Bible study curriculum detailing daily life for the powerless, navigating military oppression. Incorporated within will be the various response from oppressed groups and/or individuals found within the narratives.

Strategy 2: I will create two (2) separate questionnaires for the collective groups: a pre-study questionnaire attempting to gain the participant's knowledge of the subject matter prior to the class (also to find their level of awareness regarding our success at making space for the less fortunate), and a post-study questionnaire designed to gauge their new knowledge afterwards.

Strategy 3: I will compile a list of addresses for at least 3 community partners potentially interested in this type of advocacy work. I will also develop a flyer to promote this Bible study curriculum with SPBC.

Strategy 4: I will present the pre-study questionnaire and Bible Study curriculum to a minimum of 4 church and community groups. Upon conclusion, I will administer the post-study questionnaire.

Evaluation of Goal 1: To successfully complete this goal, I will have advertised and administered this curriculum to at least 4 audiences of SPBC members and partners. Upon completion, I will have received the completed questionnaires of at least 75% of the participants.

Goal 2: In the context of a congregation, I will develop an understanding within St. Philips Baptist Church and community of ways in which teen mothers might be hindered from equal access to resources because of their involvement with the systems of confinement from their own perspectives.

Strategy 1: I will identify and recruit at least 3 teen mothers (between the ages of 15 and 19) who will partner with the project and share their experiences as case studies.

Strategy 2: With their permission, I will conduct written, audio and/or videotaped interviews of the subjects, documenting their day-to-day experiences and struggles. These interviews will include, but will not be limited to, references to their education, finances, parenting abilities, and their involvement with the penal system.

Strategy 3: I will compile the documentation of these experiences in an honest, unbiased format with the goal of giving a snapshot of the routine issues facing these young mothers and their children.

Evaluation of Goal 2: A successful completion of this goal will involve the receipt of audio, video, or written interview documentation from the 3 case study subjects.

Goal 3: My team and I (the Site Team and expert partners) will create a public awareness campaign that gives a brief detail of the image of this group, and informs the audience of the issues threatening their success in society. *(Note: the process of organizing statistical data and personal narratives in this way will begin the framework for ultimately developing original source data on the topic.)*

Strategy 1: The members of my Site Team and I will identify and recruit at least 3 expert team members who are already working in some capacity with teen mothers and/or those who are under confinement as separate agencies.

Strategy 2: The Team and I will identify at least one public relations or marketing expert that will assist with the development of the campaign.

Strategy 3: Bringing the Site Team, expert team and public relations/marketing expert together, we will detail how to best format the information for a cohesive, most effective campaign strategy.

Evaluation of Goal 3: This goal will be completed when the Site Team and I have a) secured 3 expert team members, b) locked in a public relations or marketing expert, and c) created the framework for an effective public awareness campaign. By the end of the project, the structure of the campaign will be completed, along with a distribution calendar for a proposed official launch within 6-9 months. To be built in within the calendar will be a vehicle (webpage) to collect a 70% awareness response rate.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Historical

Historically, what is the cosmology of this group and how have they traditionally existed in society? What limitations might be encountered with adequately analyzing their needs?

The US Census Bureau¹⁷³ has more than 50 years' worth of data regarding population trends by race, region, economic scale, etc. Also well documented are projected outcomes by race and region concerning economic wealth, crime, and national practices regarding justice. In an infographic published in 2010 by the New York City Human Resources Administration's Department of Social Services, it was shown that although teen pregnancy and childbearing rates have fallen significantly over the last 20 years¹⁷⁴ in the state, being poor is still a strong contributing factor to its likelihood. Teenaged girls who live in the lowest poverty neighborhoods, like Port Richmond, Staten Island are still 2.6 times more likely to become pregnant before their 20th birthday. That's 3 out of every 10 teenage girls, with the majority, statistically being African-American or Hispanic. So the real question that arises is what is continuing to occur with regard to race and wealth in our country, and how can we respond to that issue in a real or sustained way?

A 2012 article presented in the publication "Zero to Three," detailed that overall outcomes dramatically decline for teens whose parent is incarcerated compared to their

¹⁷³ U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov>.

¹⁷⁴ NYC Department of Human Resources, Dept. of Social Services, "Teen Pregnancy Infographic," http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/news/campaigns/teen_pregnancy/teen_pregnancy_infographic.pdf.

counterparts whose parents are not in jail¹⁷⁵. The report revealed that children of incarcerated parents are “more likely to be maladjusted, delinquent, involved in drug use, drop out of school,” and yes, more likely to become pregnant in their teen years. It’s worth noting that this report focuses on decreasing these negative statistics through parental involvement (reducing absenteeism), even in the penal setting. The report references “The Baby Elmo Project”¹⁷⁶. However, I’m suggesting that the systems contributing to incarceration, as well as the actual confinement structures, are the very systems by which these negative outcomes are stimulated and perpetuated.

Unfortunately, I have found little to no comparative studies analyzing the correlation between these two societal trends. Therein lies my first limitation with this type of study. If the link to corporate profits and the mass incarceration of minorities that Dr. Michelle Alexander painstakingly uncovers in her book “The New Jim Crow¹⁷⁷” are even partially true, then I intend to show that statistically the systems that feed the trends of teenage pregnancy and incarceration are not only connected but almost guaranteed, as a generation is always being bred to perpetually produce this revenue. High recidivism rates within our criminal justice system may not solely be a product of our country’s failed (some say non-existent) attempts at prisoner rehabilitation, but rather, may be the product of a seed implanted at a very young age. How do we uproot that seed?

¹⁷⁵Natalie Brito, Rachel Barr, Jennifer Rodriguez and Carole Shauffer, “Developing an Effective Intervention for Incarcerated Teen Fathers, The Baby Elmo Program,” *Zero to Three*, May, 2012, 26-32.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press, 2012.

Biblical/Theological

What is the balance between biblical and theological principles concerning marginalized peoples, providing them aid, and our understandings concerning justice? Does this change the image of God?

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

- Luke 4:18, 19 American Standard Version

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

- John 17:22-23 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

These passages in Luke 4 and John 17 suggest that Jesus the Christ came to humanity with an imperative to provide a pathway to healing for those that are already injured by society—the poor, the “discolored,” the imprisoned—so that through a relationship with God the Son, we are all equally connected to the Trinity to and each other. Jesus came with this directive because even though faith existed in society, care of said group was lacking. How do we reconnect these frayed ends that are apparently so vital to the fabric of the Master Weaver? To what degree?

The interpretation which undergirds this project is liberation theology, a thought made known to the world by the works of Gustavo Gutiérrez in his book, of the same name¹⁷⁸. I believe that this is the belief structure that is an effective conduit by which Christianity makes better the lives of the poor in the here and now, not just later as some reward in heaven. It is

¹⁷⁸Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 22-71.

our scriptural mandate. Liberation theology gives a response to living within militaristic aggression, including these basic tenets that are found in Gutiérrez's book:

- a) class struggle: cut off from adequate education which leads to an inability to advance beyond one's station which subtly positions an incoming generation to accept and embrace a notion that living within a system of incarceration is an inevitability;
- b) the ability to gain sustainable employment in a capitalist society driven by marketability;
- c) overcoming the consciousness of poverty, through financial awareness where one becomes an owner of goods/services, not merely a consumer of goods and services;
- d) overturning stigmatizations of oppression imputed by the systems that support not only a jail culture but contributes to the disparities that is prevalent across the United States for people of a particular race and class. Survival becomes paramount, with a focus on progressive child-rearing skills, which are stymied. This ever-present, reinforced messaging encourages a sense of hopelessness.

We live in a time wherein the U.S. we incarcerate and confine more people than any other industrialized country, though our country was built upon Christian principles. Maybe, because of our advances in so many other areas, our eye to the "other" as Gutierrez calls them, is dim. How do we clear our vision? Are we so desensitized to the systems that we are told are meant to keep us orderly existing that we are numbed to the daily plight of those most vulnerable?

Justice

If justice is a continued societal need, and it is, in what ways might the practice of justice be contributing to the further diminishing of this particular target group?

I am intrigued by the possibility of making this subgroup visible. Like the Untouchables of India (the invisible caste living in the shadows of the day walkers by virtue of just being who they are), or the biblical Galileans during the 1st century, these girls, because of the systems of confinement that they are unfortunate enough to find themselves connected to, succeed or fail based on the level of their involvement in programs related to these systems. This set-up is precarious for the teen mother and their children because it depends upon whether or not these alternative resources can be found, their tenacity to find them, and whether their surrounding support system can interpret these avenues as critical to long-term recovery. Although we may not have the ability nor the authority to be able to overturn institutional paradigms, is this the only way to achieve transformation within the lives of those shackled by these systems? Maybe liberation is achievable through something more—maybe the answer lies in an overarching ontological imperative that shifts the image of God internally. I'm not suggesting a renaming of the reaches of the systems of incarceration (which is subtly what many of these programs become for the receiver), but rather a redefinition of God, and a reimagining of justice. This shift is not required by structure but emerges from a whole other body consciousness.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION PROCESS

It is the overall goal of this Public Awareness Campaign is to help the members of St. Philips Baptist Church and the Staten Island community better understand the issues teen mothers and their children face as they maneuver through the effects of incarceration. This will be achieved using a qualitative study approach.

Method of Evaluation 1

The primary and overall focus of this project is to shed light on a dark, hidden issue. In August 2016, I will begin to do this by researching and developing a comprehensive Bible Study curriculum designed to give sample biblical imperatives for being a voice for this marginalized group. The Bible study will be given in September 2016 through June 2017, to small classes consisting of St. Philips Baptist Church members and community partners interested in working to alleviate this problem. In order to more accurately measure people's awareness, I will administer a pre- and post-bible study questionnaire. In September 2016 and June 2017, I will have received the completed questionnaires from the Bible Study participants (a minimum of 75% of the total).

In August 2017, at least 3 case studies will be conducted through a process of written and videotaped pre-determined questioning. The responses of these interviews will be stored electronically for future informational and video documentary purposes and for the possible inclusion (by permission) into the resulting public awareness campaign.

My competency as a *theologian* will need to be enhanced through this initial phase of the project. In July and August 2016, I will have strengthened this competency through the

exegetical work needed to be done in order to create an effective Bible study curriculum involving identification of, and care to the marginalized in the midst of a military system. The resulting pre- and post- questionnaires will measure how successful I am in achieving this goal.

Method of Evaluation 2

In addition to hearing at the local church level the biblical need to reach and help those who are being denied access to social liberties, it is important to hear the testimony of this target group in their own words. In August 2017 I will secure 3 teen mothers to document their story (using audio and video devices). I plan to do this in brief sessions and conclude the interviews, with summaries, by the end of the month.

In order to represent the target group with integrity, I must grow in my ability as a *prophetic agent*. In December 2017, the Site Team and I will solicit the expertise of 3 external expert partners who will not only assist in the end result of the campaign but will also help inform our understanding of the complexities of the contributory factors we might encounter as we do this work. In December 2017 my team members and I will have gathered all research data (statistical reporting, interviews, etc.) and organized the materials in such a way as for the information to exegetically present itself while strengthening my voice as an agent of change.

Method of Evaluation 3

It's critically important to take the information gathered and develop a public awareness campaign in such a way as to accurately and effectively connect the correlation between teen pregnancy and imprisonment. Initially, I am finding little to no data linking the

results of the relationship between these two factors. The resulting public awareness campaign will be developed in the hopes of putting the information together as a way an original source, and carry this consciousness to a broader community.

In January 2018 I will, along with my Site Team, identify and secure a marketing expert that will assist with developing an effective and impactful print/media campaign. This will include the creation of a webpage, to be constructed by the end of January 2018. The purpose of this webpage will be to track the interest regarding the topic. By February 2018 the full Public Awareness Campaign and webpage will be presented for oral defense, with specific mailings to being sent to community leaders and governmental agencies advising the proposed launch date for the complete project. The full site will be launched and monitored daily for 6 months beginning April 2018 through September 2018. If successful, my competency as a *religious educator* will be enhanced and will be measured in part by achieving an overall viewership/response rate of at least 70% across all outlets, over the 6-month period.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The members of my site team and I have met extensively to assess my competency for the assignment, which was difficult, given the complexity of the subject matter. Based on those meetings, following are the competencies we've chosen for my development.

1) Theologian:

My task as a theologian is to engage the scriptures in a way that gives the biblical framework for the obligation of bearing witness to the suffering of this group. By shedding this light, the picture of the cosmology of the group, in its current form, will emerge. Once I've shed that light, I would then have to make a recommendation as for how this evolution might be transformed from a position of limited capabilities imputed upon by its history, to a more elevated state of being. Ultimately, what will hopefully emerge is an enlightened alternative view of "congregation," poised for transformation and empowerment, both by the target group and those they've co-existed within society.

Strategies:

- a) In order to educate myself on the many writings and theological thought related to my topic, I will schedule visits to facilities that have extensive resources necessary for this development; places like the research sections of Union Theological Seminary, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the like will help my Site Team and I engage in an advanced exegetical study. In addition to studying alternative

writings pertaining to elevating the marginalized, I plan to investigate the “Other” negatively portrayed in scripture (i.e. Galileans in the first century).

- b) A theologian must develop the art of listening as well as master the ability to wrestle with complex ideas. To that effort, I will administer questionnaires and conduct interviews with at least 3 subjects, teen mothers who are daily struggling to survive penal involvement, to identify the basis of their theology, should it exist.

Evaluation:

In order to provide an adequate evaluation of this competency, I will execute completion of pre- and post-bible study questionnaires for the curriculum administered to the focus groups (SPBC members and community leaders). The goal is to begin a dialogue concerning the subject and generate an awareness of the complex issues at play in such a way as to encourage participation in action. I will also have secured the detailed interviews from the 3 case studies.

2) *Prophetic Agent:*

A prophet, or biblical prophecy according to Walter Brueggeman in his book, “The Prophetic Imagination¹⁷⁹”, not only involves foretelling futuristic events, but it is also *forth-telling*, or speaking the truth of the practices of oppression by the group guilty of committing these transgressions. I believe that in order to develop this prophetic agent voice, and position myself to speak this group’s truths, I’ve got to have a thorough knowledge of many factors; not just our scriptural imperatives that suggest the conferred authority to do so, but I’ve also got to have a keen awareness of the real effects of poverty and ageism on the structures connected to incarceration.

In his book, Brueggeman also suggested that the masses are given just enough information to keep them content in their current condition. I liken this thought to the tethering of one animal to another, better trained (broken) one.

In the absence of overwhelming statistical data, my task is to use to qualitative analysis to dialogically construct the parameters of the issue thereby constructing its “face,” to highlight the issue, show that it has been ignored, and why it can no longer continue this way.

Strategies:

In order to acquire the knowledge suggested above, I plan to work with the site team and expert community partners to compile and analyze existing data pertaining to teen pregnancy and confinement in such a way as to allow the conclusion to either

¹⁷⁹ Walter Brueggeman, *The Prophetic Imagination*. 2nd Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.

confirm or contradict my hypothesis that there is indeed a correlation between these two systems, which further feeds generational oppression. By collaborating in this way, I hope to develop a new space that approaches these complex paradigms in fresh and imaginative ways.

Evaluation:

In order to obtain the data vital to this study, I must gain the research documentation of some of the various agencies that currently run programs involving these two issues. I will need to secure access to the reports of at least 3 such organizations.

In addition, I will create a Bible Study that I will give an in-depth exegetical presentation of the scriptural responses to this crisis.

3) *Religious Educator:*

It is not enough to give evidence as to why we should care about this issue from a theological perspective. It is more necessary to construct a project that encourages action from the respondent or anyone who engages in this effort.

Strategies:

This public awareness campaign (either by direct-mailer and/or video marketing presentation, or the like) must inspire a commitment to change. In this effort, I will take the strategies of *The Theologian* and merge them with the tools of an effective marketing plan and merge them to complete this project.

In order to achieve this task, I will partner with an experienced marketer. I have already made an appeal to the Marketing Department of the College of Staten Island (“CSI”). It is my plan to get connected to one of the current graduating candidates of this department for their partnering resources and expertise in order to complete this project.

Evaluation:

The goal of the development of this competency will be achieved in part by the creation of a Bible study raising awareness of the existence of the quiet struggle of this target group (and especially their children). In addition, the goal is accomplished by the creation of not only the public awareness vehicle but additionally the development of an avenue by which identified partners and others can share resources and remain connected to the burgeoning movement combating the issue. This will be done by the creation of a webpage that will house bulleted data discussed more fully in the Dissertation, and provide a place to leave and gather information.

I must also be able to secure the services of one (1) marketing expert, either at CSI or elsewhere.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TIMELINE

DATE	TASK/ACTIVITY	TOOLS NECESSARY TO COMPLETE TASK	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
July 2017	Proposal Approval by Director		
July 2017	Meet with Advisor	Copy of Approved Proposal	Me
August 2016	Goal 1 – Strategy 1 Begin the development of the Bible Study curriculum concerning theological aspects of justice and identifying the needs of the oppressed. Relate the course to the 2 target groups.	-Biblical resources -Data from subject interviews -Sample Questionnaires	Me
August 2016	Advertise for the Bible Study	-Community partners contact sheet -Church calendar -Church bulletin	Me & Site Team
August 2016	Create Pre-Questionnaire	Printing services (church)	Me, Inga Hyde
August 2016	Library Time for Writing and Research	SurfacePro	Me
August 2016	Goal 1 – Strategy 2 Conclude development of the Bible Study and Post-Questionnaire.	-Research materials -Printing Services (church)	Me/Inga Hyde
August 2016	Meet with the Site Team for recommendations of 3 community partners.	Community partners listing	Me
August 2016	Schedule and host appeal external team meetings	Community partners	Me & Site Team, External Team
September 2016	Administer the Pre-Bible Study Questionnaire	-Meeting space -Questionnaires	Me
September 2016 – June 2017	Administer the curriculum.	SPBC Fellowship Area	Me
September 2016	Meet with Advisor	-Copy of Proposal -Bible Study Curriculum -Questionnaires	Me/Advisor

June 2017	Goal 1 – Strategy 3 Administer Post-Questionnaires at the conclusion of the curriculum.	-Meeting space -Questionnaires	Me
June – July 2017	Meet with Site Team to review findings of the Questionnaires	-Meeting space -Completed questionnaires	Me & Site Team
June - October 2017	Library time for writing and research	SurfacePro	Me
August 2017	Goal 2 – Strategy 1 Develop forms necessary for interviews	-Obtain sample, or develop release forms -Develop interview questions	Me
August 2017	Meet with Site Team	-Meeting Space -Copy of interview questions -Sample pre- & post questionnaires	Me, Katie Cumisky, Donna Cutugno, Brenda Byrd, Inga Hyde, Gregory Simpson
August 2017	Library time for writing and research	-SurfacePro	Me
August 2017	Secure interviewees	Release forms and Interview Questions	Me
August 2017	Goal 2 – Strategy 2 Conduct interviews with the subjects and Site Team	-Meeting Space -Video Recording device (SurfacePro) -Written Forms -Refreshments	Me, Site Team, Interviewees
August 2017	Meet with Advisor	-Copy of approved Proposal -Results of Interviews	Me, Advisor
August 2017	Goal 2 – Strategy 3 Compile and review interview data	-Meeting space -All data forms	First Me, then with Site Team
August – September 2017	Goal 3 – Strategy 1 Meet with Site Team to review research updates -Construct criteria for external expert team members	-Meeting Space -Completed Questionnaires from Bible Study participants -assigned research findings	Me & Site Team

December 2017	Schedule and host expert team member appeal meeting to at least 3 persons.	Listing of proposed expert team members.	Me & Site Team
December 2017	Goal 3 – Strategy 2 Meet with marketing (including print advertising) resources	-Contact list for resources for developing a public awareness campaign	Me & Available Site Team Members (especially Katie Cumisky, Inga Hyde) -CSI Marketing Dept. rep and others
December 2017 – January 2018	Meet with Advisor	-Copy of Approved Proposal -Any conclusions from Goals 1, 2 and 3 -Overview from Site Team) -Initial campaign construct	Me & Advisor
December 2017	Research strategies for print medium	-Marketing resources -Video clips from interviews	Me, Inga Hyde
January 2018	Goal 3 – Strategy 3 Meet with Site Team, available community partners and external team to fully develop campaign.	-Initial proposed print presentations; -Any conclusions from Goals 1, 2, 3	Me & Site Team
January 2018	-Schedule Campaign development meetings -Schedule proposed date(s) for Advertising	-Meeting space -Church Calendar -Church Bulletin -Letter to community groups	Me & Inga Hyde
January 2018	Library Time for writing and research	SurfacePro	Me
January 2018	Meet with Advisor	-Copy of Approved Proposal -Any conclusions from Goals 1, 2, 3	Me & Advisor
January 2018	Develop campaign distribution calendar and simple campaign website	-Media vehicles	Me, Team Members
January 2018	Schedule distribution meetings	-Meeting Space -Distribution sources	Me, Team Members, Outreach vehicles (local newspaper, etc.)

January – February 2018	Construct preliminary Public Awareness campaign and webpage	-Campaign -PowerPoint Presentation	Me
February 2018	Present preliminary Campaign and webpage for Written Dissertation	-Campaign -PowerPoint Presentation	Me
March 2018	Oral defense of Dissertation	-Campaign -PowerPoint Presentation	Me
April 2018	Launch Full Public Awareness Campaign and webpage	Campaign	Me, Team Members, Site Team
April 2018 & beyond	Monitor campaign and webpage	Online	Me

APPENDIX B

TIMELINE/BUDGET

DATE	TASK/ACTIVITY	TOOLS NECESSARY TO COMPLETE TASK	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	BUDGETARY CONSIDERATION/COST	SOURCE OF FUNDING
July 2017	Proposal Approval by Director		Dr. Keith Russell	\$0	
July 2017	Meet with Advisor	Copy of Approved Proposal	Me	Gas/ Tolls \$15 Meeting location costs: \$0 Printing: \$50	Personal
August 2016	Goal 1 – Strategy 1 Begin the development of the Bible Study curriculum concerning theological aspects of justice and identifying the needs of the oppressed. Relate the course to the 2 target groups.	-Biblical resources -Data from subject interviews -Sample Questionnaires	Me	Gas, Copying, binding	Personal
August 2016	Schedule date for Bible Study; Advertise	-Church Calendar -Church Bulletin -Letter to community groups	Me & Inga Hyde	Gas (minimal) Marketing costs: SPBC \$0	
August 2016	Create Pre-study Questionnaire	-Printing Services (SPBC)	Me	\$0	
August 2016	Library time for writing and research	-Initial Bible Study -Sample Questionnaires	Me	Online	Personal
August 2016	Goal 1 – Strategy 2 Conclude development of the Bible Study. Create Post-Study Questionnaire	-Research materials -Printing Services (SPBC)	Me & Inga Hyde	\$0 Online	
August 2016	Meet with the Site Team for recommendations of 5-7 community partners.	-Meeting Space -Community partners listing.	Me & Site Team	Gas (minimal)	Personal
August 2016	Schedule and host external team appeal meeting(s).	-Meeting Space -External team listing	Me & Site Team (as available)	Gas (minimal)	
September 2016	Administer the Pre-Bible Study Questionnaire	-SPBC Fellowship Area -Questionnaires	Me	\$0	
September 2016 – June 2017	Present Bible Study & Pre-/Post Questionnaires	-Meeting space	Me & Site Team	Gas (minimum) Meeting Space: donation (\$100)	Personal (or donated)

		(St. Philips Baptist Church Fellowship Hall) -Questionnaires			
June 2017	Goal 1 – Strategy 3 Administer the Post-Study Questionnaire at the conclusion of the curriculum.	-SPBC Fellowship Hall -Questionnaires	Me	\$0	
June – July 2017	Meet with Site Team to review findings of the Questionnaires	-Meeting Space -Completed Questionnaires	Me & Site Team	Gas (minimum)	
June – October 2017	Library time for writing and research	SurfacePro	Me	Gas/Tolls (\$15)	Personal
September 2017	Meet with Advisor	-Copy of Approved Proposal -Strategy 2 Conclusion Documents (Data from Interviews; Completed Questionnaires; Overview from Site Team)	Me & Advisor	Gas/Tolls Copying, Binding \$40	Personal
August 2017	Goal 2 – Strategy 1 Develop forms necessary for interviews	-Obtain sample, or develop release forms -Develop interview questions	Me	Gas \$25 Subject Honorariums or In-Kind gifts?	
August 2017	Meet with Site Team	-Meeting Space -Copy of interview questions -Sample pre- & post questionnaires	Me, Katie Cumisky, Donna Cutugno, Inga Hyde, Brenda Byrd, Gregory Simpson	Gas Copying \$40 Meeting Space: \$0	Site Team agrees to absorb the costs, except for bridge tolls, which will be covered by me if necessary.
August 2017	Library Time for Writing & Research	SurfacePro; documents	Me	Gas/Tolls \$15 (optional, if leaving SI)	Personal
August 2017	Secure interviewees	Release forms and Interview Questions	Me	Gas/minimal	Personal
August 2017	Goal 2 – Strategy 2 Conduct interviews with the subjects and Site Team	-Meeting Space -Video Recording device (SurfacePro)	Me, Site Team, Interviewees	Gas; Meeting Space (Children's Village, SI) Copying (SPBC): \$0	Personal

		-Written Forms -Refreshments			
August 2017	Goal 2 – Strategy 3 Compile and review interview data	-Meeting Space -All data forms	Me/Site Team	Gas (minimal)	Personal; Site Team to cover their travel expense.
August 2017	Meet with Advisor	Copy of Approved Proposal and Results of interviews	Me/ Advisor	Online	Personal
August – September 2017	Goal 3 – Strategy 1 Meet with Site Team to review research updates -Construct criteria for external expert team members	-Meeting Space -Completed Questionnaires from Bible Study participants -assigned research findings	Me & Site Team	Gas (minimal)	
December 2017	Schedule and host expert team member appeal meeting to at least 3 persons.	Listing of proposed expert team members.	Me & Site Team		
December 2017	Goal 3 – Strategy 2 Research strategies for print medium; library time for writing and research	-Video resources -Video clips from interviews	Me, Inga Hyde, Katie Cumisky	Gas (minimal)	Personal
December 2017	Meet with print/ advertising resource (including CSI)	-Video and editing resources contact list (CSI Marketing Dept. rep. & others) -Video clips from interviews	Me & Katie Cumisky	Gas Software? \$100	Personal
December 2017 - January 2018	Meet with Advisor	-Copy of Approved Proposal -Any conclusions from Goals 1, 2 and 3 -Overview from Site Team -Initial campaign construct	Me & Advisor	Gas/Tolls (\$15)	Personal
January 2018	Goal 3 – Strategy 3 Meet with Site Team, available community partners and external team to fully develop campaign.	-Initial proposed print presentations; -Any conclusions from Goals 1, 2, 3	Me & Site Team	Gas (minimal)	Personal
January 2018	Schedule campaign development meetings	-Meeting Space -Initial campaign findings	Me & Site Team	Gas (minimal)	Personal
January 2018	Schedule date(s) for proposed print advertising	-Church Calendar -Church Bulletin	Me & Inga Hyde	Gas Marketing \$100	Personal

		-Letter to community groups			
January 2018	Library Time for writing and research	SurfacePro	Me	Gas/Tolls (\$15)	
January 2018	Meet with Advisor	-Copy of Approved Proposal -Any conclusions from Goals 1, 2, 3	Me/ Advisor	Online	
January 2018	Develop campaign distribution calendar and sample campaign webpage	-Media vehicles	Me, Team Members	Online	
January 2018	Schedule distribution meetings	-Meeting Space -Distribution sources	Me, Team Members, Outreach Vehicles (local newspaper, etc.)	\$200	Donated resources
January – February 2018	Construct preliminary Public Awareness campaign and webpage	-Campaign -PowerPoint Presentation	Me	Online	
February 2018	Present preliminary Campaign and webpage for Dissertation	-Campaign -PowerPoint Presentation	Me		
March 2018	Oral Presentation and defense of Preliminary campaign and webpage	-Campaign -PowerPoint Presentation	Me	NYTS Offices Gas/Tolls (\$15)	Personal
April 2018	Launch of Full Public Awareness Campaign and Webpage	-Print Campaign & Webpage	-Print Distribution -Online	Mailing Costs (?)	?
April 2018 & beyond	Monitor campaign and webpage	-Campaign -Webpage	Me	Online \$0	

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March 1, 2017

Dr. Wanda Lundy
Director, Doctor of Ministry Program
New York Theological Seminary
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 500
New York, NY 10115

Dear Dr. Lundy,

It is my pleasure to introduce myself to you. My name is Inga Wilson-Hyde and I am a member of St. Philips Baptist Church, located in Staten Island, NY. I very proudly serve as a Trustee and the Church Clerk & Administrator under my illustrious Pastor, Dr. Tony Baker, Sr. as well as my dedicated and inspirational Assistant Pastor, Rev. Agnes McBeth. As you of course know, Rev. McBeth is feverishly working towards completing her course work in order to receive her Doctor of Ministry, and I am honored to have been selected by her to serve on her site team.

"Redefining Congregation Through the Unveiling of the Inner-City Teen Mother Entwined in the Systems of Incarceration." Wow...that's a mouthful! However, it is something that intrigues me greatly and I am excited to put into action what Rev. McBeth has outlined in her proposal. I know that she has spent an inordinate amount of time delving into the key components that are necessary in order to come up with a viable solution to this problem that plagues way too many of our young people. I look forward to working with her and the other site team members as she completes this journey.

Should there be any reason for you to contact me directly, please feel free to do so at the above email address and I will respond as quickly as possible. If not, then I look forward to meeting you when Rev. McBeth will present her final findings to you.

Sincerely,

Inga M. Wilson-Hyde
Inga M. Wilson-Hyde

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APPENDIX B

In 2010 there were roughly **614,000** pregnancies to teens age **15-19**...
...that same year **2.7 million** children had a parent in prison.



Can you help me?

Teen mothers navigating detention systems. We see you. We're here to help.

A.R.I.S.E.

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